

# PROVINCETOWN

## A R T S

US: \$10 • CANADA: \$14

VOLUME 14  
ANNUAL ISSUE  
1999

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS  
AS AN ART COLONY  
1899 – 1999

"The fishermen were much respected—they were real, and artists tend to have a tropism toward the real.

Besides, those Portuguese fishermen had no small reputation as lovers."

—Norman Mailer

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PHOTO MARIAN ROTH

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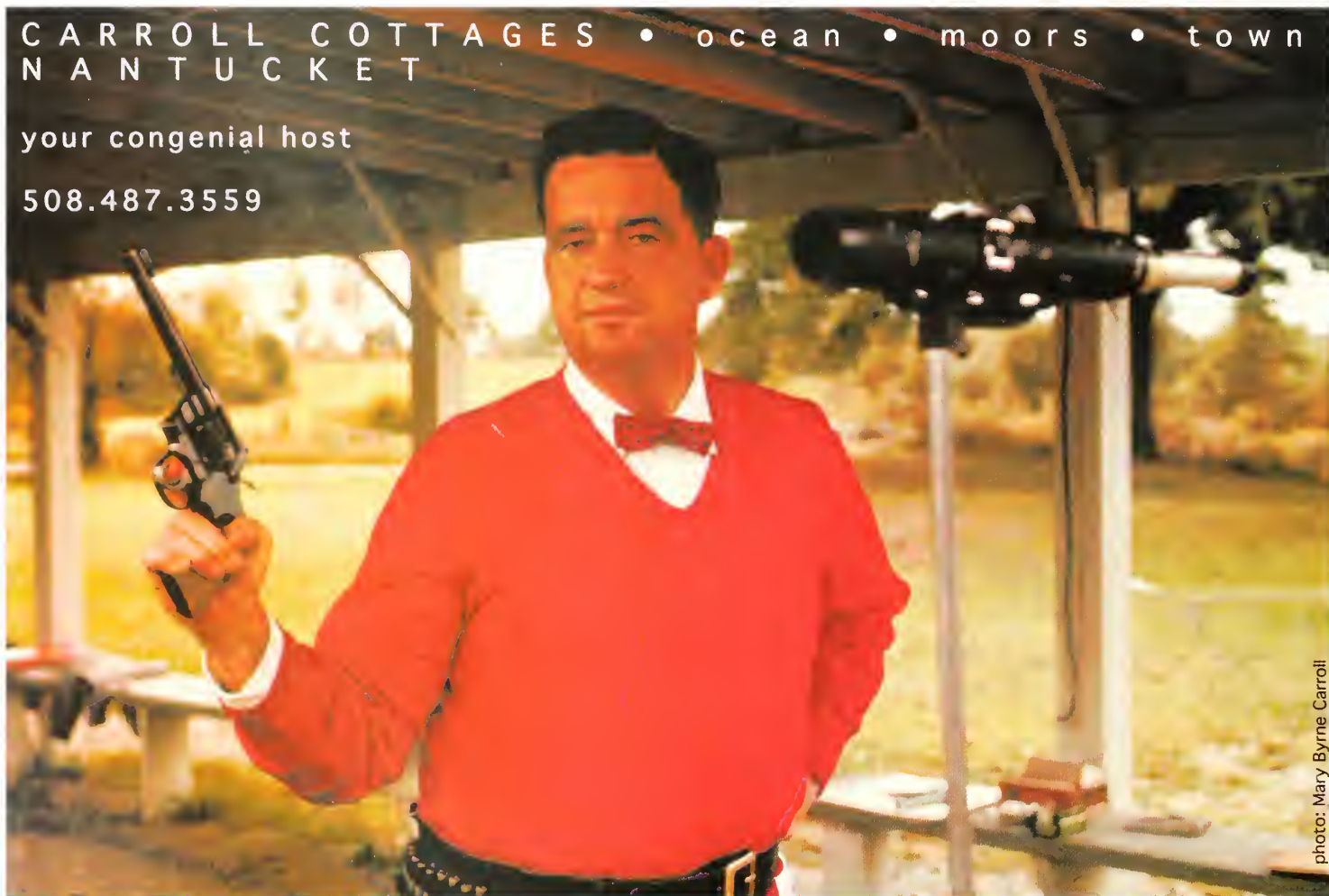
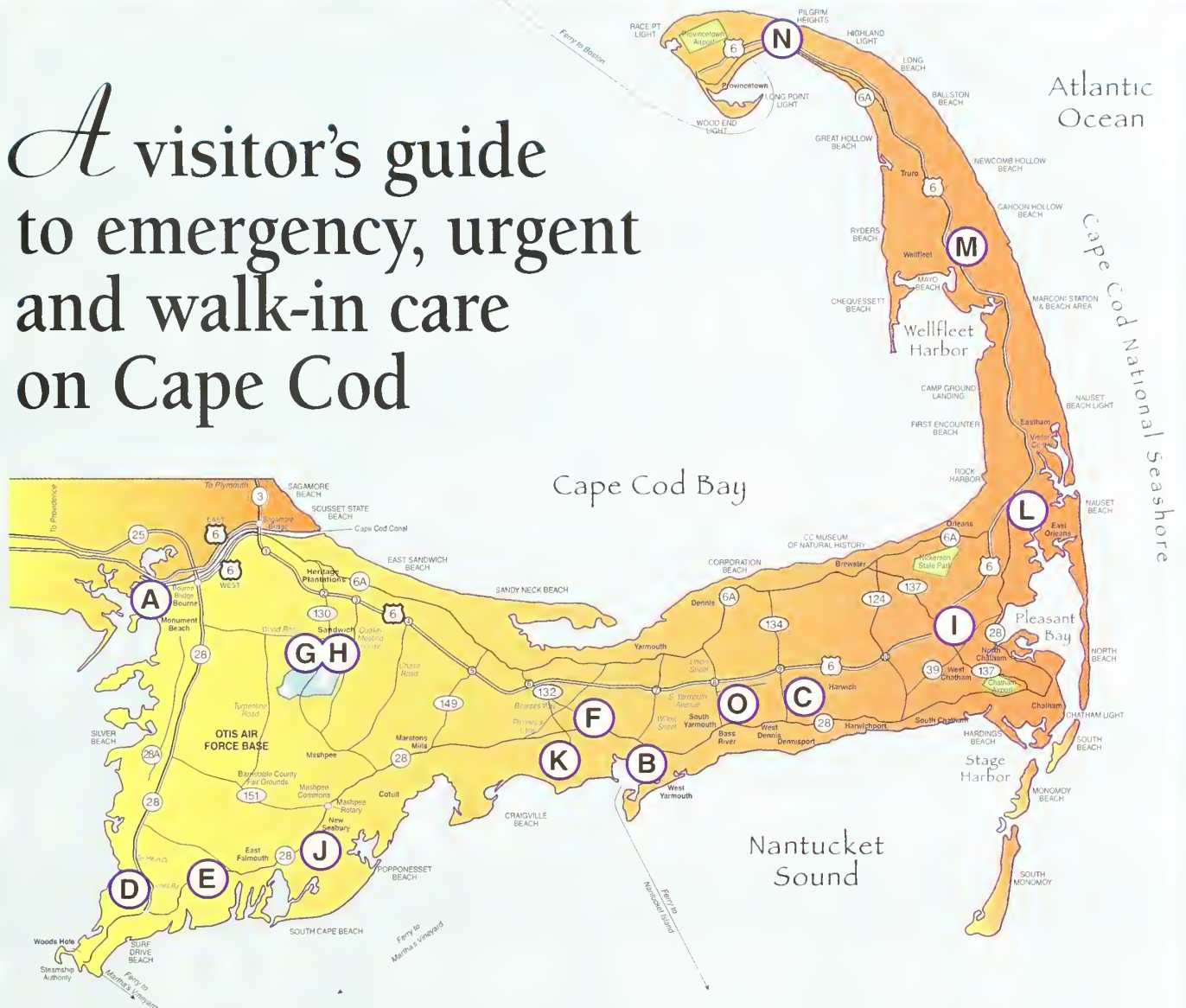


photo: Mary Byrne Carroll



# A visitor's guide to emergency, urgent and walk-in care on Cape Cod



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508-394-7113

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**K Mid Cape Medical Center (w/u)**  
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**L Orleans Medical Center (w)**  
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508-255-9577

**M Outer Cape Health Services (w)**  
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JULY 27-AUGUST 21

RECEPTION THURSDAY-JULY 29, 5-7 PM



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## MAIN GALLERY

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"ART + SUITCASE:  
WILL TRAVEL"  
CURATED BY  
BILL BARRELL,  
RON MOROSAN &  
NICK LAWRENCE

JUNE 18 - JULY 7

BREON DUNIGAN  
PETER HUTCHINSON  
DEAN NIMMER

JULY 9 - JULY 28

NOA HALL  
KAHN/SELESNICK  
JOE WHEELWRIGHT

JULY 30 - AUG 18

ANNA POOR  
DANIEL RANALLI  
TABITHA VEVERS

AUG 20 - SEPT 8

GREGORY AMENOFF  
HIROYUKI HAMADA  
JOEL MEYEROWITZ

SEPT 10 - SEPT 29

MARY BEHRENS  
M.P. LANDIS  
FRANCIE RANDOLPH

OCT 1 - OCT 17

"ESCAPE"  
CURATED BY  
NICK LAWRENCE &  
ZACH FEUER



PETER HUTCHINSON, TCHAIKOVSKY'S REPRISE (ALLITERATIVE LANDSCAPE SERIES), 1998, PHOTO COLLAGE, M/M  
PHOTO CREDIT: DOUGLAS MCFADD

## SIDE GALLERY

MAY 28 - JUNE 16

"ART + SUITCASE:  
WILL TRAVEL"  
CURATED BY  
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RON MOROSAN &  
NICK LAWRENCE

JUNE 18 - JULY 7

JANAN COMPITELLO  
PRESENTS:  
JENNY HOLZER,  
SHIG IKEDA,  
ZAC WARD

JULY 9 - JULY 28

HARRY HOLL

JULY 30 - AUG 18

BARBARA SINGER  
PRESENTS:  
STEPHANIE CHUBBUCK,  
TODD MCKIE,  
PEIK LARSEN,  
MAUDE MORGAN,  
MARTIN MULL

AUG 20 - SEPT 8

BERNARD TOALE  
PRESENTS:  
AMBREEN BUTT,  
LESLIE DILL,  
ELLEN DRISCOLL

SEPT 10 - SEPT 29

ABOUBACAR KABA  
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OCT 1 - OCT 17

"ESCAPE"  
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*The First Visit,  
Provincetown  
(c.1920)*

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EST. 1973

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MODERN ART

EST. 1973

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BYRON BROWNE  
*Sunbather (1945)*

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# BERTA WALKER GALLERY

in Provincetown, the summer art capital of America (Boston Globe)



Paul Resika

*Violet Sky, Orange Boat, 1998, oil on canvas, 44 1/2 x 73 1/2"*

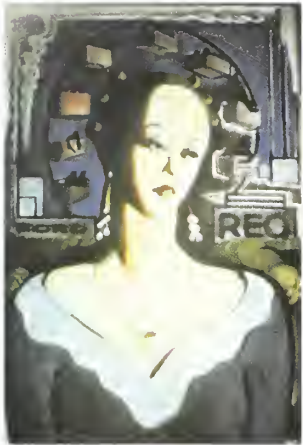
NOW REPRESENTING: \*Robert Beauchamp, Varujan Boghosian, Carmen Cicero, Romolo Del Deo, Salvatore Del Deo, \*Joseph De Martini, Martha Dunigan, Jane Eccles, Gilbert Franklin, Ed Giobbi, Robert Henry, Jane Henry, Brenda Horowitz, John Kearney, Drew Klotz, James Lechay, Tom O'Connell, Erna Partoll, Richard Pepitone, Jim Peters, Paul Resika, Helen Strong, Selina Trieff, Nancy Whorf.

ADDITIONAL WORK BY: Oliver Chaffee, Edwin Dickinson, Sue Fuller, Charles W. Hawthorne, Karl Knaths, Blanche Lazzell, Ross Moffett, Agnes Weinrich.

FOLK ART AND FURNITURE BY: \*Hyman Shrand, Rose Basile, Peter Hunt, Nancy Whorf and a major collection of AFRICAN ART. ( \*Estate Representation)

208 Bradford Street • Provincetown, MA 02657  
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# Berta Walker Gallery Exhibition Schedule, 1999



Emily Farnham, Michigan Woman, 1939  
O/C, 26 x 18"

## May 28 - June 15

**EMILY FARNHAM:** *"An overview of paintings at 87"*

Plus the world premiere of Emily Farnham's book,  
HOFMANN: Abstraction as Plastic Expression  
and Notes Made in Hofmann's Classes.

## June 18 - July 5

**GIL FRANKLIN,** new wood sculpture

**ED GIOBBI,** floral watercolors

**JANE HENRY,** mixed-media sculpture

**MUFFIN RAY,** floral and landscape paintings



Ed Giobbi, "Dried Roses #2, 1993, mixed media, 29 x 43"



Gil Franklin, "Duet", 1998  
Wood Construction, 18" high



Jane Henry, Figure Dancing, 1998  
8" high

## JULY 9 - JULY 27

*"Provincetown Figurative Expressionists"*

paintings:

**ROBERT BEAUCHAMP, CARMEN CICERO,  
ROBERT HENRY, JAMES LECHAY, SELINA TRIEFF**

sculpture:

**ROMOLO DEL DEO**



Muffin Ray, "Peggy's Pond", 1999, O/C



Selina Trieff, "Travellers" Diptych, 1996, Oil & Gold Leaf on panel, each, 72" x 60"

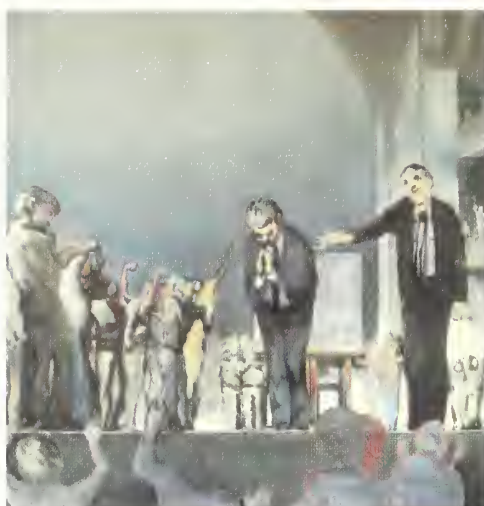
*Celebrating our 10th Anniversary in Provincetown!*



# Berta Walker Gallery Exhibition Schedule, 1999



Romolo Del Deo, *Sentinel Well*, 1995  
Bronze, Ed of V, 42" x 30"



Robert Henry, *"Bravo!" (Wish Fulfillment II)*, 1998  
O/C, 56" x 56"



James Lechay, *Self-Portrait*, 1981-93, O/C, 52" x 41"

## JULY 30 - AUGUST 17

*"Together Again!"* **PAUL RESIKA/  
VARUJAN BOGHOSIAN/VARUJAN BOGHOSIAN/PAUL RESIKA**  
and **JIM PETERS:** recent paintings and drawings



Jim Peters, *"Red Studio, Blue Sky"*, 1999  
O/C, 48" x 44"



Varujan Boghosian, *"Three Yellow Objects"*  
1998, Construction



Paul Resika, *"Red and Pink"*, 1998-99  
O/C, 72" x 60"



Richard Pepitone, *"Nightwatch" #1*, 1996  
steel, 72" high

## AUGUST 20 - SEPTEMBER 6

**NANCY WHORF**, recent paintings  
**RICHARD PEPITONE**, recent steel sculpture  
**MARTHA DUNIGAN**, mixed-media sculpture

*Celebrating our 10th Anniversary in Provincetown!*



# Berta Walker Gallery Exhibition Schedule, 1999



Nancy Whorf, "Howland and Commercial Street, Winter", 1999, O/P, 36 x 48"



Martha Dunigan, "Cannibal's House", 1998  
wood, glass, tacks, tar paper, bones (open and closed)



Charles W. Hawthorne, Bradford Street, Provincetown, 1926-30, WC, 13 1/2 x 20"

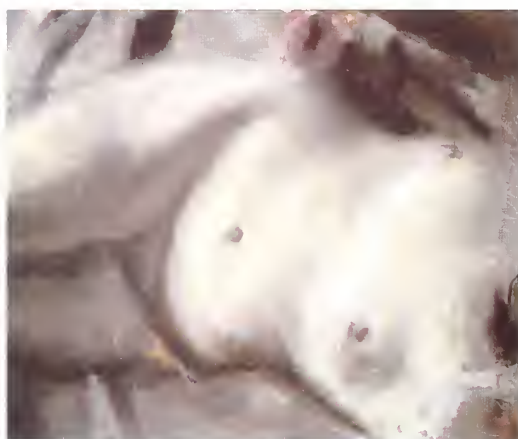
## SEPTEMBER 10 - 21

### Celebrating Provincetown's Centennial: Hawthorne, His Students, Their Students

(from the Gallery's collections) **CHARLES W. HAWTHORNE** (and Hawthorne's students) **EDWIN DICKINSON**, **HENRY HENSCHKE**, **ROSS MOFFETT**, **JOHN WHORF** (and Dickinson's Students) **SAVATORE DEL DEO**, **PHIL MALICOAT** (and Henschke's Students) **RICHARD ANUSZKIEWICZ**, **ED GIOBBI**, **FRANZ KLINE** (and Moffett's Student) **JACK TWORKOV** (and Whorf's students:) **CAROL WESTCOTT**, **NANCY WHORF**



Salvatore Del Deo, Nude w/ Pink Rose, 1998, O/C, 32 x 16"



Edwin Dickinson, Nude w/ Pink Rose, 1939, O/C, 23 1/2 x 29"



Ross Moffett, "Ice in Provincetown Harbor", 1934, O/C, 20 x 30"

## SEPTEMBER 24 - October 15

**ERNA PARTOLL**, large lyrical watercolors

**JANE ECCLES**, hand-made paper paintings

**ROSE BASILE**, folk paintings

Erna Partoll, Circle Rising, 1999  
Gouache, 21 1/2 x 29"



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# Passions Gallery

*Art to Fall in Love With*



## *Opening Schedule 1999*

All our openings are on Friday nights, unless otherwise noted, and begin at 5pm for Collectors Only and open to the public at 6:30pm

**June 4 - 6pm** Grand Opening Party  
Celebrating 1999 (no Collectors Only Party)

**June 19 - 3pm** Open House  
Weekend Group Show Benefiting the  
Provincetown International Film Festival

**July 16** Judy Francesconi

**July 23** Eric Kluin

**July 30** Noel

**August 6** Paula Vazquez

**August 13** Colette Hébert

**August 27** Bernard Stanley Hoyes

**October 15** Women's Week Goddess Show

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336 Commercial Street, #4-F Provincetown, MA 02657 800.211.8913 / 508.487.5740 [www.passionsgallery.com](http://www.passionsgallery.com)

## ACTIVELY BUYING AND SELLING THE BEST OF PROVINCETOWN PRINTS & PAINTINGS



PHOTO: JAMES ZIMMERMAN

Lucy L'Engle

Martha Graham Dancers, 1933

Bakker Gallery offers a monumental selection of both old and recent Provincetown art for sale from \$200 up. Our current inventory includes works by: Allen, Baker, Behnken, Benson, Bicknell, Blum, Brown, Cabral, Carson, Cohen, Davis, Ditacchio, DuToit, Edel, Euler, Evaul, Farnsworth, Freed, Freedman, Fried, Friedman, Gieberich, deGroot, Gross, Harmon, Hawthorne, Hondius, Hughes, Knaths, Landis, Lazzell, L'Engle, Lindenmuth, Loeb, Maurer, Mazur, Moffett, Orlowsky, Patterson, Rann, Ravenscroft, Raynor, Ried, Ross, Sherwood, Shinn, Simon, Small, Smith, Stoughton, Trieff, Vevers, Villard, Warthen, Webb, Whorf, Wyman, and Young among others.

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W. Charles Nowell, *Bird of Paradise*, oil, 38" x 28"

## 1999 Summer Schedule of Openings

*July 10*  
Jerry Geier, Sculpture  
Cynthia Samuelson, Acrylics

*July 17*  
Steve Allrich, oils

*July 24*  
Kevin J. Shea, Oils  
Steven Graber, Mixed Media

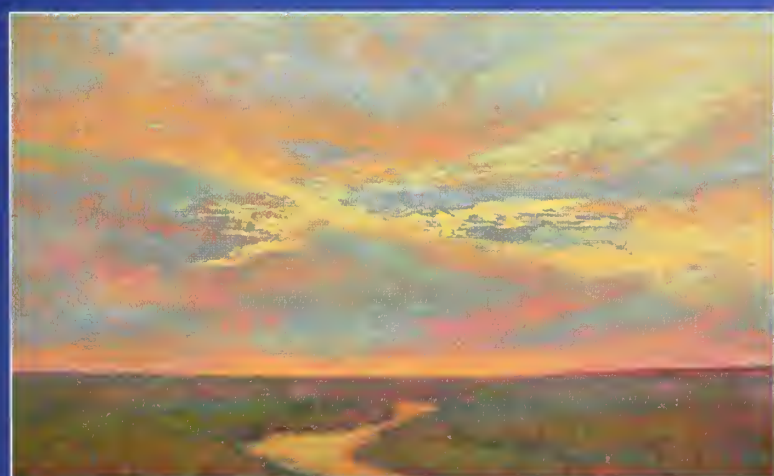
*July 31*  
W. Charles Nowell, Oils

*August 7*  
Robert J. Barra, Oils  
Olaf Palm, Oils

*August 14*  
John D. Neubauer, Oils  
Gilbert Fahey, Oils

*August 21*  
Claire Flanders, Photographs

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Exhibition Date: August 13th through August 19, 1999



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Also view John Grillo's paintings at Cafe Heaven, Provincetown

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PHOTOGRAPH BY RENATE PONSOLD

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# PROVINCETOWN

A R T S

A publication of Provincetown Arts Press, Inc.,  
a non-profit press for artists and poets

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What is the sound of 100 buzzes buzzing? We're sure to hear it this autumn during the **Centennial Fall Arts Festival**. From September 23 to October 3, Provincetown's non-profit arts organizations—the Fine Arts Work Center, the Provincetown Art Association, WOMR, the Provincetown Theatre Company, the Provincetown Rep, the Community Compact, the Monument Museum, and Provincetown Arts Press—will hold exhibitions, plays, concerts, readings, and symposia. Gallery walks, tours of artists' studios, and an opening day parade will bring arts lovers out in the streets. Keep an eye out for schedules of events!

**Abstraction Made Elementary (AME)**, a nonprofit organization based in Boston, was founded by artist John Ruggieri in 1994 at the Provincetown Art Association with second and third-graders from Veterans Elementary School. The children visited Paul Bowen's and Elspeth Halvorsen's studios and the UFO Gallery. AME exhibits of children's abstract art have since been presented in Boston, Cambridge, and Washington, DC. This spring saw "Pattern, Pop, and Layer: Abstract Works by Children and Artists: Kelly Spalding, Michelle Weinberg, and John Ruggieri" at Harvard University's Longfellow Hall. Curator Dan Elias says, "If we are becoming a culture which demands creative thought, mental flexibility, and the ability to synthesize information, then training in abstraction will be essential. This exhibition supports training in the visual arts as training for life."



AME CLASS PAAM APRIL 1994 PHOTO MARK FINNEN

The **American Stage Company**, in its inaugural season, presents the 20th-anniversary production of Harvey Fierstein's Tony award-winning *Torch Song Trilogy* at Provincetown's Town Hall. A formidable cast, assembled by artistic director Matthew Lombardo and producing director David Davis, is led by James Lecesne, winner of the 1995 Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Awards for his one-man show *Word of Mouth*.

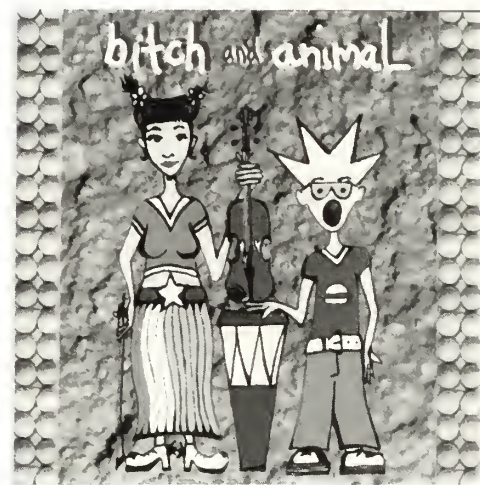
This year author **Michael Cunningham**, whose novel *The Hours* is reviewed in these pages, won the Pulitzer Prize and the PEN/Faulkner Award. Former Fine Arts Work Center Fellow **Nick Flynn**'s first book of poems, *Some Ether*, won the "Discovery"/The Nation Award and the 1999 PEN/Joyce Osterweil Award for Poetry, which recognizes an emerging American poet. *Some Ether* is forthcoming from Graywolf Press in April 2000. **Frank Gaspar**, whose work is also reviewed in this issue, won the Brittingham Prize for poetry for his recent book, *A Field Guide to the Heavens*.

Also on the award front—**Mira Schor**, whose essay appears in this issue, won the College Art Association's Frank Jewett Mather Award for Art Criticism in recognition of her establishing a "crucial counter-discourse" through the art journal *M/E/A/N/I/N/G*, co-founded with Susan Bee and published from 1986 to 1996. With her acceptance speech Schor brought some laughs to an otherwise sober CAA conference convocation in Los Angeles: "A friend of mine calls this the Frank Jewish Mother Award, and I've found myself calling it the Cotton Mather Award, suggesting two views of the art critic—the first as hectoring but perhaps well-meaning back seat driver, and the second as ideological demagogue. I hope to avoid these identities." Schor concluded with something of a personal manifesto: "I want to read writing that makes you want to make art, not hate art. So I keep on trying to write it."

**Tabitha Vevers** and **Daniel Ranalli** spent six weeks this winter exploring the temple ruins and southern beaches of Thailand and the mountains of Nepal. Vevers recounts, "With home just a fax away in Bangkok and e-mail available on every corner in Katmandu, traveling halfway around the world does not feel as distant as one might expect. It was not until we were trekking in Nepal, away from cars, computers, and phones, amidst the terraced mountainsides of the Annapurnas, that we truly felt a hemisphere away." The couple kept copious journals and fanciful sketchbooks.

**Susan Baker's** *The History of Provincetown*, a book featuring dozens of her paintings with humorous captions, will be released this summer with a celebratory exhibit at the Fine Arts Work Center. In his preface to the book, John Skoyles writes, "Baker's book captures the cock-eyed, tilted spirit of Provincetown, along with some lively as well as very deadly facts. Her paintings leap with verve and wit. Where else can one view so many great figures as figures of fun?...we find Tennessee Williams, Judy Garland, Jackson Pollock, Tony Perkins, and Roy Cohn with their guard down."

Co-directors of the Provincetown Group Gallery, Emma Ross and Joanna Miller, set out on a new venture this winter, opening with great fanfare **Gallery Bershad** in Somerville. Jim Peters, one of many Provincetown artists taking the journey north, had a show there in May.



**Bitch and Animal** is not just a band, it's an attitude! They aren't just fierce chicks who embrace the strong female archetypes for which they are named, they are philosophers, beat-makers, instrumentalists, and political "pussy art" performers. Sometimes this hybrid causes a little confusion, as Karen ("Bitch") explains: "Some people think we must not be feminists because of our name. We call these the boat-missers. Other times people actually think we're a comedy troupe. They'll come up to us after a show and start talking about our 'skits' or comedy festivals we should attend. I just say, 'But we're a band!'" You may have caught Bitch and Animal in Provincetown last summer (and they'll be back!). Ever since, they have been touring the country in their van ("Vanna Love"), spreading their sparkly seeds and drumming up fans. Their first album, *What's that Smell?*, was released this spring.

**Campus Provincetown** is the catch-all name for a consortium of education, arts, and nonprofit groups joining with the business community to implement higher-education opportunities in Provincetown. The Lower Cape Cod Community Development Corporation, realizing the off-season economic potential of the concept, is leading linkages between the public schools, theaters, the Center for Coastal Studies, the Fine Arts Work Center, and others. The Provincetown Art Association, Cape Cod Community College, Provincetown High School, and the Schoolhouse Center have already joined to form the Provincetown International Art Institute, offering college-credit art courses right here at home.



The **Cape Museum of Fine Arts** in Dennis presents "A Century of Impressionism," curated by Cindy Nickerson, a veteran art columnist for the *Cape Cod Times*. In her catalogue essay, Nickerson quotes the formalist Blanche Lazzell who had a fling with Impressionism when she arrived: "To be in Provincetown for the first time, in those days, under ordinary conditions was delightful enough, but that summer of 1915, when the whole scene was new, was glorious indeed." The exhibition traces the long traverse of a living tradition of Impressionism, anchored by the directors of the Hawthorne School that succeeded Hawthorne, including Henry Hensche and Lois Griffel. On top of this important show, The CMFA is entering Phase II of its ambitious renovations, which will include adding two new galleries, a full reference library, and a new museum shop. Fundraising for the \$650,000 construction cost is well underway.



CMFA PLANNED EAST ELEVATION

**Truro Center for the Arts at Castle Hill** has a full schedule of classes in everything from painting to book arts to—for the first time in 20 years—jewelry-making. This year's Distinguished Artists and Writers Chair is *Fear of Flying* author Erica Jong, who will speak at the Wellfleet Congregational Church on July 17. Other special events include a reading of *Love Letters* by former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, and, for true addicts, a lecture by Will Shortz, editor of the *New York Times* crossword puzzle. Among exhibitions is "Doty's Choice," a selection of local art chosen by poet Mark Doty.

On a blustery day in January, teacher, poet, and advocate for the elderly **Grace Gouveia Collinson** was remembered at a memorial service at St. Peters. The Cape End Manor is soon to be renamed in her honor. Rachel White, once a student and a long-time friend of Collinson's, recalls, "She went bare-legged and wore sandals summer or winter, not out of eccentricity, but because she liked comfort." At the memorial, Collinson says, "Everyone seemed to agree that Grace was a fitting name."

**Comfortable Shoes**, a singing trio composed of folk guitarist **Peter Donnelly**, Michael Holland, and Debra Piccolo, got their start in Provincetown three years ago. This May they performed with the New York Pops at Carnegie Hall. Donnelly released his first CD, *a sure thing*, which features a favorite number from The Mews' coffeehouses—at which Donnelly plays host—the curiously rap-infused "Gay Ghetto."

New to the Wellfleet scene is the **Davis Gallery**, founded by that maker of famously fat clay cats, Al Davis, who opened the season with a show of works by members of the venerable Provincetown Beachcombers Club.

**DNA Gallery**, a veritable circus of new art, will have several guest curators this summer, including Bernard Toale, hosting a video festival, and Aboubacar Kaba, exhibiting African sculpture. Sunday night readings are organized in conjunction with *Compost*, *FENCE*, and *Barrow St.* magazines. The elastic wit of Duchamp was resilient in DNA's opening exhibit, "Art + Suitcase, Will Travel," conceived by Ron Morosan and Bill Barrell, director of Provincetown's Sun Gallery in the early '60s, where some of the earliest Happenings took place. For this traveling show each work fits in a functional suitcase bearing the stamps of earlier visas. Local artists are picked up and added at each new venue. This time, the Benson Brothers, Paul Bowen, Jenny Humphreys, Peter Hutchinson, Amy Kandall, David Mamo, Anna Poor, and many others added their luggage to the heap.

**East End Gallery** director Bunny Pearlman spent the winter in Israel, living in a spare studio on the edge of the desert. She was one of 14 artists on a fellowship at the Arad Arts Project. In a ritual protest of the Jewish custom that forbids women from serving God, Pearlman painted her portrait wearing on her forehead the magic leather box that only men may wear.

The **Fine Arts Work Center** kicks off its fifth year of Summer Workshops with expectation of 500 students in attendance—more than double its first-year enrollment. A show of paintings from the Town's art collection, curated by local artist John Dowd, celebrates the centennial in July. When queried as to his curatorial policy in choosing from the over 300 pieces in the collection, Dowd simply said, "I picked the best ones." In August, Robert Pinsky and Stanley Kunitz host "Favorite Poems II," an evening of poets reading, of course, their favorite poems.

The **Hawthorne School of Art**, housed in Charles Hawthorne's studio barn on Miller Hill, hosts "An Homage to Hawthorne," a symposium moderated by Salvatore Del Deo, which will explore Hawthorne's lasting influence on Provincetown painters. Summer workshops, held in the old barn and surrounding dunescape, are taught by Peter Gee, William Eval, and Ann Lord among others.



JOHN KELLY AS JONI MITCHELL

The performance artist **John Kelly** appears nightly this summer at Tropical Joe's, accompanying himself on guitar and dulcimer, and singing Joni Mitchell's songs in their original key. Kelly's countertenor has an uncanny echo of Mitchell's soprano, and Mitchell's career is eerily chronicled—from '60s hippie chick to cool L.A. maven of the '70s.

**Simie Maryles Gallery** is the showcase for the eponymous oil and pastel painter whose fiery impressionistic works are always tinged with the burn of romance. Now the gallery is filled by a husband-wife team that includes the metal sculpture of Moe Van Dereck, as well known as his spouse for his amalgam of talents as artist, musician, carpenter, fireman, writer, sailor, and more—really!



TIM MCCARTHY IN UGANDA PHOTO. PETER LIEN

Gay video documenteur **Tim McCarthy** has amassed more than 3000 hours of tape over the past nine years, documenting ACT-UP demos at the White House, gay pride marches in Moscow, closeted gay life in Hanoi, and out gay life in Provincetown. In January, accompanied by writer Timothy XX Burton and photographer Peter Lien, McCarthy took his JVC GR DVM1 Cybercam digital camera to Uganda, the area (along with Rwanda and the Congo), that many scientists believe to be the birthplace of HIV. Burton writes, "On an expedition to Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, McCarthy documented his footsteps up the mountain. A guide, learning that McCarthy co-habitated with HIV, warned of the stress of the trip, but at the end admitted the expedition had brought Tim more fully to life."



**Brian McNaught's** video "On Being Gay," produced by Ron Robin, is recommended for the humor and authority the author reveals while enhancing understanding of homosexuality for heterosexual audiences, religious groups, and young people struggling with sexual orientation.

**Albert Merola Gallery** presents an extraordinary lineup this summer. Among the artists to be featured: *Provincetown Arts '97-98* cover subject John Waters; the man behind the lens of that very cover, Jack Pierson; the renowned Indian Space painter (and father of our founder) Peter Busa; and, in a show minimally titled "H.O.," and curated by gardener Tim Callis (who knows the value of this element in making things grow), Robert Gober, Vija Celmins, Hiroshi Sugimoto, and others, all working with the theme of, you guessed it—water.



JOHN WATERS: *METHOD* (DETAIL), 1998

**Meeting House Theater**, located at 236 Commercial Street, is the venue for two plays produced by Tidal Theater Company, a group including Vanessa Vartabedian, Caitlin Gibbon, and Robin Howard, a professional Broadway actress who has worked extensively with the original Provincetown Playhouse and the Wellfleet Harbor Actor's Theater. The two plays are Carlos Fuentes' *Orchids in the Moonlight* and British playwright Shelagh Stephenson's recent London smash, *The Memory of Water*.

Artist Lee Musselman has opened the **Musselman Gallery** in the old Susan Baker space at 379 Commercial Street. He will show white line prints, painting, and sculpture—some complementing his own folksy aesthetic—by artists from Provincetown, Tennessee, New Mexico, and elsewhere. The impetus behind his endeavor? "It was always a dream to do my own thing," Musselman confides, then adds with his unmistakable high-pitched giggle, "Besides, I was starving in the winter."

Artist and writer **Eileen Myles**, poet-in-residence this summer at the Schoolhouse Center, reviewed Morgan Norwood's installation at the historic Seth Nickerson house in Provincetown in *Art in America*, calling the work a "dense, teeming hieroglyph of the town." In her review, Myles noted a recent lineage of local mythology that includes Cookie Mueller, Jack Pierson, and Mary Oliver.



STUDIO VIEW, CHARCOAL DRAWINGS BY RAY NOLIN, AFTER CHARLES HAWTHORNE'S *CLEANING FISH* AND *THE CHILDREN*

**Ray Nolin** has begun a series of large charcoal drawings after Charles Hawthorne's paintings. "My approach is all one medium, all one size, all one master," the painter explains. He hopes to complete the series of 18 pieces by the year 2001 and his new studio at the Bull Ring (379 Commercial—among the last beachside studios in town) will provide the perfect surroundings. This summer Nolin plans to hold painting demonstrations in the manner of Hawthorne, on the beach, decked out in whites, every Saturday at noon.

The newly formed **Payomet Performing Arts of Truro** launches its season under the artistic direction of Guy Strauss. Payomet (the name of a Wampanoag tribe that inhabited the Cape in the 1600s; Payomet was later shortened to Pamet) presents drama, literature, and music performances at the Truro Center School. Highlights include David Hare's one-act *The Bay at Nice* and Edward Albee's *Marriage Play*, several evenings of jazz, and a full schedule of summer drama classes for children.

"The mix of people who went on the trip reminded me of why I live in Provincetown," said Robyn Watson, the **Provincetown Art Association and Museum's** director, following PAAM's trip to China in December and January. The group of 36 were half yearround residents and half summer residents. In a Confucian temple in Beijing, Watson rang "the biggest bell in the world and it made my back tingle." Centennial celebrations at PAAM include exhibitions of the paintings of our founding father, Charles Hawthorne, an exhibition recreating the famous Forum 49 abstraction show, and a series of Friday night talks modeled on Forum 49's panels called—what else?—Forum 99. Much anticipated as well is a retrospective exhibition of work by long-time Provincetown resident Mischa Richter. Best-known as a cartoonist for the *New Yorker* since the 1940s, Richter's paintings, drawings, and collages to be shown include the muralist-inspired "Homeless" series.

The **Provincetown Community Compact** announced its first round of grants for the "100 Artists in the Community—Provincetown Centennial Initiative" project. Compact director Jay Critchley's motto for the two-year project is, "It takes a community to raise an art colony," by

linking artists of all stripes (writers, dancers, craftspeople, gardeners) with young people to form innovative participatory projects. Among the first recipients are Rex McKinsey who will, together with children, craft models of figureheads to be paraded at the Blessing of the Fleet, and Laurel Brooke, who will, with students, design and create hand-made percussion instruments from household objects, then hold an "alternative orchestra" performance.

The first annual **Provincetown Poetry Festival**, organized by Roger Chauvette and Dennis Rhodes and held in April, was a tremendous success. Four days of readings, lectures, and workshops focused on "a celebration of the creative word," and culminated in a packed house poetry slam above Napi's restaurant, won by a New Yorker who had never been to P'town, Carol Rosenfeld. Her winning poem was about using spirit and pride to clean the tarnish off that "L"-word—lesbian—"so when we say witch, queer, and dyke, those words shine." Next year's theme, "Home," has already been announced, so poets take note of your abodes.

If it were possible to be at four screenings simultaneously, one could have seen 30 of the hottest films on earth over three days in June during the inaugural **Provincetown International Film Festival**, presented by the Provincetown *Banner* and the Beacon Cinema Group. The organizers honored John Waters in an evening at Town Hall, where the filmmaker received the Festival's award for "Filmmaker on the Edge."

Have the **Provincetown Traffic Planners** gone Conceptual on us? New digital signs installed all over town this spring are meant to direct visitors to parking lots with spaces to spare, but how is one to read the scrolling digital letters while moving at a presumably faster rate oneself? We can only conclude that someone at Town Hall recently caught a Jenny Holzer show!

The **Provincetown Theatre Company**, housed at the Provincetown Inn, presents in May *Lettice and Lovage*, the hilarious comedy by Peter Shaffer; in July, *Hay Fever*, in celebration of the 100th anniversary of Noel Coward's birth; and in August, an antidote to Hollywood's Shakespeare love-affair—*I Hate Hamlet*, by Paul Rudnick.

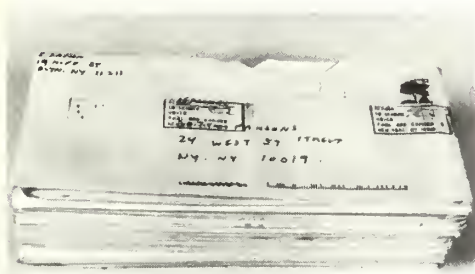
The **Provincetown Rep** plans for October 2 at Town Hall a symposium during which playwrights John Guare, Lanford Wilson, Terrence McNally, Wendy Wasserstein, A.R. Gurney, and Christopher Durang will consider "The Future of American Theater."

**Sarah Rapson**, a young British artist living in Brooklyn and former FAWC Fellow, began a feminist dialogue with American art history shortly after her arrival on these shores in 1989. She found a lot of difficulty entering the art world, and wished for the ease of the old days,



## Letter from the Editor

when Rauschenberg walked into the Betty Parsons Gallery and scheduled a show for the following May. Rapson found Parson's name in gallery advertisements in old art magazines and began writing letters to the deceased dealer. While the letters are returned to sender, they aren't ineffectual. Rapson showed a stack of the cancelled envelopes at White Columns in New York this spring.



SARAH RAPSON, LETTERS TO BETTY

**Christina Schlesinger**, whose colorful blockprints were shown last summer at Wellfleet's Cherrystone Gallery, has also been following her instincts back in time. The artist spent the winter looking at mid-century paintings by Gorky, Picasso, and Pollock and has found their biomorphic and abstract shapes parading into her own work. The attraction was a shock, she says, "I've been running around the world decrying white male artists and suddenly here I am completely seduced—they were on to something." Schlesinger wonders whether the Saarinen and Chermayeff houses of her youth in the Wellfleet woods, the butterfly chairs and hot pink Design Research dresses, might also be seeping back into her consciousness.

Dianna Matherly, in remission after battling breast cancer, has relocated from the South End of Boston to the West End of Provincetown, where she and Jessie Kalelka have opened **Tristan Gallery**. In October they will exhibit photographs by Jamie Di Venere that tell the story of one woman's recovery from this same disease.

**Berta Walker Gallery** sadly notes the passing of Dr. Hyman Shrand, folk artist and pediatrician, on April 22, after a long illness. During his last exhibition in September of 1998, Shrand was lauded by fellow artists Paul Resika, Varujan Boghosian, and Selina Treiff.

See who reigns as Bacchus, the god of wine, and Herb Pomeroy, "The King of Zydeco," meet under the Cape Cod Melody Tent in Hyannis for **WOMR's** 5th Annual Music, Food, and Wine Festival on August 17th.

In 1999, we celebrate the centennial of Provincetown's art colony. Together with fans of Duke Ellington and Vladimir Nabokov, whose would-have-been 100th birthdays inspired plentiful tributes this year, our clocks tick ahead of the global crowd's as it revs instead toward the new millennium. Here, the moment—of gazing back, summing up, squinting ahead—is now.

In these pages, April Kingsley remembers our "founding father," Charles Hawthorne, whose establishment of the Cape Cod School of Art in 1899 marks our origins. While his aesthetic descendents, devotees of our famous light, still dot the harbor fringes, it is Provincetown's mid-century that resonates today, revealing tread marks of what Kingsley famously defined as a "turning point" in American art. And so our cover subject, Norman Mailer, recalls especially his early days here, beginning with his arrival in 1946. Irving Sandler profiles Weldon Kees, the impresario whose founding of the exhibition and series of talks called Forum 49 made the summer of 1949 one of Provincetown's most momentous. The Wellfleet woods of the 1950s may have been shaded to the public eye, but the personalities there shone, as Marian Cannon Schlesinger highlights in her memoir. And Frances Richard brings us up to the enduring pivot of the 1960s in "signifying" the artist Bob Thompson.

A special section entitled "What Is an Artist?" begins with Hans Hofmann's response to this question, raised on the first evening of Forum 49. Fifty years ago he told us, "Traditions must not end in self-contentment," and we concur, giving today's artists—dancer and choreographer Bill T. Jones, artist and writer Eileen Myles, artist and activist Jay Critchley—a space in which to consider the query in present tense.

In this issue, we find a preponderance of interviews—with writers, artists, a playwright, the Town's shellfish constable. In Provincetown, such conversations happen casually everyday as we meet on Commercial Street. Of what do we speak? One word sums it up—survival. Way back in 1949, a musician named Robert Israel scribed a letter to the editor of the *Advocate*. In it he lodges his "deep distress" over the destruction of "free creative experiment" caused by "intensified economic competition." He documents the flight of "real" artists to more welcoming locales and cautions against an imagined phenomenon: "It is surprising that some enterprising individual has not organized an agency for professional painters, instructed to wander about the town in various stereotyped guises, so as to enhance the local color and lure a greater number of patrons."

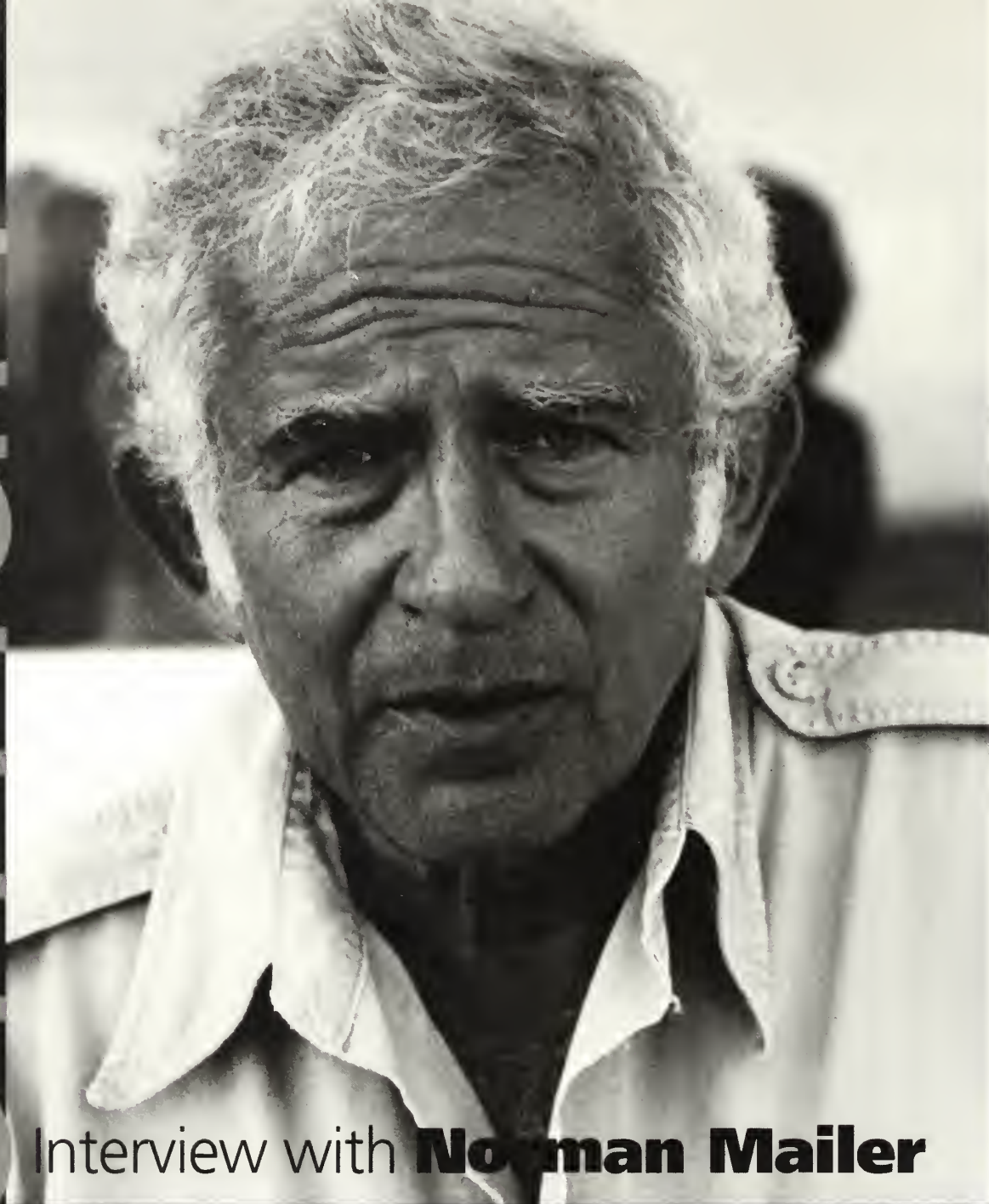
One hundred years is the span of a lifetime for the luckiest of us. If Israel's ominous missive represents a mid-life crisis, it was certainly soothed during the bounteous '50s and '60s. As they should be, the "golden years" were relatively quiet ones. Today, Israel's anxieties are back to haunt us as artists fight to keep working in the face of very real economic threats. Still, these artists—the real things, not costumed impostors—are poised and, one hopes, ready, to take that first deep breath toward the new lifetime of our next century.

A year ago, as I weighed my own readiness to fill and, like a cobbler, re-fit, the shoes of Chris Busa, I was infused by conversations with many of the people who appear in these pages. Certain ones, Chris most of all, along with Ivy Meeropol, Jay Critchley, and Mira Schor, helped cast conceptual focus. Others, like Paul Lisicky and Mark Doty, who last summer promised to write for the next issue, inspired with the collective conviction that "this magazine simply *must* be." Still others, the overwhelming number of readers who echoed this faith through their response to our very first fundraiser, made it bottom-line possible for us to forge ahead. And finally, I must simply say that the staff and new board of the Press are as good as it ever gets.

It has been a joy and an honor to engage in this collaboration, and to listen to and put on record the voices and reflections of this time in our town.

Jennifer Lise

# Norman



## Interview with **Norman Mailer**

by Christopher Busa

*Fourteen years ago, Norman Mailer appeared on the cover of Provincetown Arts. If most cells in the human body change completely every seven years, then Mailer has changed twice since we last looked deeply into his face. Mailer appears now as the author of books unwritten in 1987—Harlot's Ghost, Oswald's Tale, Portrait of Picasso as a Young Man, The Gospel According to the Son, and The Time of Our Time, an anthology of the author's writings that proves he is his own best editor. Awesome in their range, depth, and ambition, these books may be the finest of an extraordinary career. The author of The Naked and the Dead—Mailer's first novel, begun in North Truro in 1946—became a major writer at the age of 26. Now, on the high seas of his 70s, he looks back and calls the widely acclaimed book "the work of an amateur."*

*Mailer and his wife, Norris, a painter and novelist whose first book will soon be published, have lived yearround in Provincetown in recent years. Mailer writes at a desk under the apex of his brick house on*

*the waterfront in the East End. A picture window looks west along the shoreline to the wharf and Monument, and when the late afternoon sun is bright, he is obliged to cover the view with a curtain. On one side of his desk, a ping-pong table supports stacks of research materials. On the other is a simple mattress on the floor, where the author rests his eyes while working. One senses from the arrangement that the author is the ego who manages the sleep/work cycle between the researcher and the dreamer.*

*Six of Mailer's 30 books have been written entirely in Provincetown and 18 others in part. During a bullfight, the bull finds a spot at the edge of the arena where he goes to restore his energy before charging again at the matador. Provincetown offers this sanctuary to Mailer as he does battle with the world. At a cocktail party years ago, Mailer's good friend, the writer Eddie Bonetti, said, "You know, Norman, I like you in spite of your celebrity." And Mailer responded, "Eddie, how would you like it if I said I liked you in spite of your obscurity?"*



**NORMAN MAILER:** Anytime I say something that's not clear, please interrupt. If you think you have a better idea than I have, interrupt—although, caution there! And if you have something that's not necessarily going to be agreeable for me to hear, that's fine. I react better to criticism than to compliments.

**CHRISTOPHER BUSA:** You prefer tension, I know, so I've learned never to say anything nice to you.

**NM:** If you keep telling me how good I am, frankly, I get bored. It doesn't do anything for me now. When I was young, it did a lot!

**CB:** So, let's get a picture of your origins in P'town. What possessed you to come here in the first place?

**NM:** The first visit was in 1942. I had just finished my junior year at Harvard. It'd been a crazy summer. I'd worked in a mental hospital. Then I worked in a small theater group. I think I was here in July. I came here with the young lady who later became my first wife, Beatrice Silverman. We were contemporaries. She was going to Boston University. I was going to Harvard. We decided to go away for a weekend. She picked this place. It had no meaning for me.

**CB:** What was her attraction to it?

**NM:** She'd heard it was interesting and fun. Of course, in those days, we were always looking for something that was agreeable to the eye. You know the way kids are. We wanted to see a place that had charm, and was, ideally, perhaps European, because the war was on and there was no question of going to Europe unless you were in the army. If I recall properly, we took a train from Boston, all the way to P'town, a four-hour trip. It used to end up parallel to Harry Kemp Way, and then came in behind the gas station on Standish Street. At one time, it ran all the way out to the pier, to pick up the fish, but by this time it stopped on Standish. The last part was very slow indeed, from Hyannis on. But then we saw the town—incredible. I'd never seen a town like that.

**CB:** How long did you stay?

**NM:** About three days.

**CB:** Do you remember where?

**NM:** Yeah, we stayed in one of the rooming houses on Standish Street. We found a room not even one block from the railroad station. There was something easy about it. Naturally, as kids, we were worried whether we would be taken for husband and wife, but it was obvious the landlady couldn't have cared less. That was the first time I'd ever run into that, because things were pretty starchy in those days. They didn't look lightly on young men and young women who weren't married who passed themselves off as married.

**CB:** Even in Provincetown in that period?

**NM:** Provincetown has always been ahead of the rest of the nation. One of the things I love about this town and which I always tell people who haven't been here, is that this is the freest town in America. People can argue. But it's free now, with the gay population, and it was free long ago when the artists came here. One of the reasons they came was they loved the freedom of the life here. You could live with whomever you wanted and in any combination you wanted. To have sexual freedom has always been terribly important to artists.

**CB:** What I noticed, growing up here, is the way families and their kids are integrated into that freedom. You went to these wonderful parties and there would be young children there!

**NM:** I think there just wasn't money for a babysitter. Or, the best friend, the babysitter, was going to the party also.

**CB:** You're cynical, Norman.

**NM:** No, it's just that I was at a lot of parties where there were no kids. Particularly, in a period we'll get to, you wouldn't have wanted kids there. Some of those parties got pretty wild. Not wild by draconian standards, but a lot of people were getting drunk, people were barfing, occasionally there'd be a fight. You didn't want a kid running around scared stiff by a fight. Usually a girl with long hair and a certain kind of look in her eyes, slightly spacey, holding a kid on each hand, would come wandering into the party. She wouldn't necessarily get a great welcome. People wouldn't be rude to her, but it wasn't what we were looking for. So, to return to the beginning, we had three days here. The town was incredible. Of course, there were no lights allowed at night.

**CB:** Because of the war.

**NM:** There was a blackout, and the streets had a mystery, an 18th-century quality. Occasionally you might see a candle behind a window shade. It gave you a feeling you were back a hundred years or more. Certainly the architecture didn't destroy that impression. The town looked, surprisingly, a good deal of the way it does now—because of the sand, and because nobody in this town could ever allow any major corporation to come in and sink their roots, thank God!

**CB:** And that's what you love about our local democracy—its grass roots, which grow in sand, give an organic texture to the community?

**NM:** Well, it keeps the community from getting too big. I don't know that the reason we don't have high-rises is because the sand won't take it or because nobody here could agree long enough to allow a corporation to get together enough land to build a high-rise. Thank God we don't have corporate shithouses that are five, six, seven stories tall, the sort of things that are beginning to deface Hyannis. We don't have dead-ass, mall-architecture all over the place. In that sense, the town is still very much the way it was then.

## Norris

by Norman Mailer

I admire and am intrigued by the little mysteries that my wife, Norris Church, evokes in her best work. It is genre, and the painter's tale she tells is usually of middle-aged men and women from middle America, people one would not necessarily wish to sit next to on a train or a plane, tourists, housewives, or peppy grandmothers with a small but crazy light in their eye because they are on vacation. There they are, much like this woman dressed in yellow, optimistic, unafraid, and so innocent that one's case-hardened heart feels for her. Full of the glow of brilliant sun and big sky, she is nonetheless fixed in all the interred time of a family snapshot. Blissful, she is as American as her pocketbook which looks very much like a portable radio. From the white plastic frames of her eyeglasses, down to the sturdy set of her legs, she is our perfect and absolute American, sweet, optimistic, a little bewildered—oh, boy!—at the vastness of the space in which she stands, and wholly unaware of the faint shadow of the sinister that rides along that outgoing American highway down which we travel for the rest of our lives, off on our vacation, full of snapshots for which we posed that never told us where we were, and what the shadows had to say of that other highway which winds beyond our means to the mortal mystery of our ends.



NORRIS CHURCH, LEAVING CALIFORNIA, 1982



**CB:** The eaves of one roof are tucked under the wings of a neighbor's house. There is a busy urban proximity we share because of the closeness of the houses, yet you get this freaky isolation you mentioned, walking down the street on those foggy evenings where a candle in a window is the only light. It's like a movie set, but without the overlit intensity of Hollywood.

**NM:** I wouldn't disagree—it has that. A friend of mine came up recently. What he was taken with—he'd never been here before—was the enormous sound of the wind down Commercial Street, which I had never noticed. He said, "You never noticed it! It's as if a jet plane is going by."

**CB:** It's not true you never noticed. You talk a lot about the winter wind in *Tough Guys*.

**NM:** Yes, but not that sound, the example he gave. Since then I've heard it. An extraordinary sound. Like a propeller whose blades are 60 feet long is sucking the air down a huge tunnel. Anyway, to go back to my first impressions: we were only here about three days. Then we left. The following winter we got married, in '44, a year and a half later. All through the war, once I went overseas (Bea served in the Waves so she never went overseas but she was in uniform), we kept writing, back and forth, about what we would do when this war was over. We would go to Provincetown and spend a summer there.

**CB:** Does it say that in your letters?

**NM:** Yes. In June of '46, we took the boat from Boston to here. We rented bikes. I forget what we did with our luggage. I do remember getting on bikes and looking for a place. For some odd, stupid reason (looking back on it maybe it was a lucky reason), we bicycled clear out of town to the East End and went down 6A—I don't think Route 6 was even in existence then. We ended up at a place called the Crow's Nest, which is still there. It's over on the North Truro line. I always thought I was in Provincetown that summer, but in fact I was in North Truro, maybe a half mile from the line. Now the Crow's Nest is altogether different—it's one long building with rooms for rent, housekeeping apartments. In those days, it was separate little bungalows.

**CB:** Right on the beach?

**NM:** Right on the beach, in two rows. Some bungalows were right on the water; some were one step back. We were one step back. We spent the summer there and would bicycle to Provincetown just about every day for food, bring it back in our bike baskets, and we'd write. We'd write. Sometimes we'd write in the morning, sometimes in the afternoon. I forget how long we'd write. But in the course of a couple of months there I must have written the first 200 pages of *The Naked and the Dead*. It was either good luck or bad luck. For one thing, we didn't get much of a feeling for Provincetown that sum-

mer. We were out of the town. We didn't make friends with people in town. The people we saw that summer were people we'd known already who came up to visit. Family would come—it was hard to get food that summer. When Bea's folks would come they'd bring certain goodies, like rye bread.

**CB:** Or bagels?

**NM:** Yes. It was the first summer after the war, and it was very good for work. If we'd lived in town I might have had a totally different existence. I might have lived here and had a great time, cheated on my first wife, fucked up all over the place, never wrote a word.

**CB:** You were protected from failure by your will to become a writer.

**NM:** I've thought about it often. It was a summer of great fun, with absolute devotion to work.

**CB:** Well, you were wired because you came back from the war with the notes that would become the novel.

**NM:** I wanted to write, I really did. It might have worked in town—maybe we wouldn't have met that many people. Who knows? In any event, that writing got *The Naked and the Dead* started. A few months later, back in New York, I got a contract based on those first 200 pages. I worked all year. I'm not even sure we came back the following summer for more than a visit or two. My cousin, Charles Rembar, a fine lawyer who has argued literary cases, such as the obscenity trial concerning the U.S. publication of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, had a house up here. We may have visited him for a week. Kurt Vonnegut was living up here. I'm not sure of these dates. Kurt Vonnegut was definitely living here, but whether it was that year, 1947, or whether it was later, because I was back here in '51, I can't say. But after the summer of '46, I worked on the book all year and finished it in the fall of '47. Spent the winter and spring in Paris, came back to New York in the summer of '48—I don't know if we were in Provincetown that summer. Then went to Hollywood for a lot of '49. I think by '50 we were back here. Bea and I broke up in '51. I started living with Adele Morales and we came here and rented a place. One summer we rented the Hawthorne house that's up on Miller Hill Road. At one time it was the only house on the hill. Now there are about 15 houses or so it seems. That was a wonderful house. It had a little studio as well and that was where I worked on *Barbary Shore* quite a bit. That book was started in Paris, continued in Vermont, where I spent a winter before I went out to Hollywood. The first draft was finished in Hollywood. Then I worked on it up in P'town in that house, then bought a house in Vermont, then finished it in late '50. The book came out in May of '51.

**CB:** If we were to jump from the past to the very present—you've seen Provincetown change over 50 years. In one sense you've said it hasn't

changed that much. Its attitude remains open and tolerant.

**NM:** Architecturally it hasn't changed that much. In terms of what the town is like, it's changed immensely. The people here now are altogether different from the people then.

**CB:** The town is certainly less bohemian. Now, it is possible to say with plausible irony, most of the gays are straighter than the straights.

**NM:** In the early days, and this carries through to the '60s, the town had, essentially, one ongoing tension. That was between the Portuguese and the artists. Some of the Portuguese fishermen were wilder and stronger than any artist you'd ever find. We'd get drunk together and have arm-wrestling contests, often. I remember Bottles was the one guy nobody could ever beat.

**CB:** Bottles?

**NM:** Bottles Souza. He was really good at arm-wrestling. He had a reputation for being the strongest man in town, which was saying a lot in Provincetown in those days when you've got all those fishermen. I remember asking him once, "Bottles, did you ever know Rocky Marciano?" They were contemporaries. He said, "Yeah, I knew Rocky. I knew Rocky *when*." I was fascinated. It came over me, sure, he's the strongest guy in Provincetown, he's heard about this strong man in Brockton. They were both about 17 or 18. So maybe one day when they are all drunk they get in a car and drive down to Brockton to look up Rocky Marciano and arm-wrestle. So I said, "You knew him?" "Yeah," he repeated, "I knew him *when*." I said, "Bottles, what was he like?" Bottles looked at me and said, "Rocky? Rocky was *crazy*!" That's all he ever said about Marciano.

**CB:** I never met Bottles. My local hero, a half generation after your time, was someone perhaps less strong but equally charismatic—Victor Alexander, the goateed bartender at Rosy's, who wore a gold stud in one ear before it was fashionable.

**NM:** The tension in town then was between the Portuguese, who were Catholic and observant and very family oriented, prodigiously family oriented, and the artists, who came every summer with a different mate, sometimes a different kid. Of course, we were smoking pot. It was all right to get drunk in town—but not pot. That was the tension then. Now the artists have virtually disappeared. You've still got a good many over at the Fine Arts Work Center, but you don't have that feeling that this is a painter's town the way you used to, when you had Motherwell, Hofmann, Kline, Baziotis, Helen Frankenthaler when she was married to Motherwell, and you had a number of younger artists who were building their reputation, damn good people like Jan Muller, Wolf Kahn, and your father, Peter Busa. For people who knew the art world, there must have been 20 artists here of note any given summer. Now it's no longer a vanguard, let's put it that way.



**CB:** I'm very conscious of what you say. I couldn't live in Provincetown, especially in the winter, without the Work Center.

**NM:** Get it straight, I'm not objecting to the Work Center. I wish there was more of that. In those days there wasn't a Work Center, which would have been a very good time to have one. But there were all these well-known painters, and that gave a certain tone to the town, plus an interesting tension. The Portuguese looked askance at the artists. They looked at these great painters and didn't know what they were doing.

**CB:** There was cross-cultural communication. For example, my father traded plumbing services for painting lessons. The plumber's idea of paradise was to paint a nude figure.

**NM:** Also, there were women who came up here to study art and ended up marrying or living with a good many Portuguese fishermen. There was a lot of that. Those Portuguese fishermen had no small reputation as lovers. There was one grand lady I knew, who shall remain nameless. She was big, she was blonde, and she had been married to a distinguished literary intellectual in Western Massachusetts. He was a renowned critic and she was a fabulously beautiful woman, and big as a frigate. She left him that summer, came here to live, and ended up living with a young fisherman for an entire year. And if you were a young painter or a writer and you were invited out on a fishing boat, that was a big deal. The fishermen were much respected in those days, and properly so—they were real, and artists tend to have a tropism toward the real. Provincetown was not only most agreeable to the eye, but it was real, with real people. It had been a whaling town. It was real enough that when the Pilgrims came here, they decided to move on because it was a little bit too real. It wasn't nurturing.

**CB:** It was harsh. Even the Indians only came to Provincetown during the warmer months, like the present-day New Yorkers. They would come down from the mainland, out to the edge, to get shellfish and have a good time. They didn't live here in the winter. The clay base of glacial Cape Cod ends at High Head in North Truro. The sea spit up all the sand that is Provincetown. So our turf is insubstantial and the foundations of houses are fragile. We are protected by the difficulty of surviving here. It's very hard to live here, and in fact, in the days you remember in the '50s and '60s, hardly anybody lived here in the winter.

**NM:** A friend of mine, John Elbert, spent a winter here, and I came up to visit him in '57 or '58. I'd known him in the Village. He was looking to save money and write. It was a grim winter, nothing was open.

**CB:** You are obliged to face isolation—that's the test, a marvelous test. Can you go in a room, face a blank sheet of paper, and come up with something that's worth the sacrifice?

**NM:** When one's a young writer there's that awful feeling that life is going by and you're not getting enough experience for your future writing. It's hard to be a young writer and a monk. It's why so many young writers will let a couple of years go by before they start another book. It's only when you get older that you go from one book to another, where you finish a book and two months later you're on your new book. In the beginning, it's two or three years between books because you want to fill up; you want to have new experience. The irony, of course, is that the immediate experience you get is not stuff you can write about; in fact you probably shouldn't touch it yet.

People have always said to me, "Why don't you do an autobiography?" The main reason is I don't want to use up my crystals. What I mean is that certain experiences have an inner purity to them. They remind me of a crystal. I use the word advisedly. Your imagination can project through this experience in one direction, and you can have one piece of fiction. You can project through the same crystal in another direction and have another piece of fiction. What I call a crystal experience is not a simple one, rather a most complex one, but it has this other quality that it can be studied from many angles to produce many results. So, whenever you write about something that's a crystal experience, you are dynamiting one of your richest narrative sources. I don't want to write an autobiography because that'll mean I'm done as a writer.

**CB:** The autobiography would reveal your crystals—to yourself?

**NM:** No, it would use them up. The crystals are right in the middle of my life. I'd have to use them if I were to tell a reasonable narrative of my life. I've never written directly about any of my wives, for example, for just that reason. The experiences were too rich, too complex, and too enigmatic to use directly. As long as I don't use them directly, I can write about 20, 30, 40, 50 women on the basis of the six women I've been married to, plus a few other women, of course.

**CB:** Thank God for breaks between marriages, because you get some fresh experience. I've only been married twice, yet I define myself as a serial monogamist. I go from one woman to the



**Norman Mailer makes a movie about our local serial murderer. The extras are still raving about the catering.**

FROM SUSAN BAKER'S *THE HISTORY OF PROVINCETOWN*, FORTHCOMING THIS SUMMER

next woman and I try not to be two-timing the woman I'm with. When you start doing that, the relationship is over. I got trained as a husband and enjoyed the idea of being married to one person, and I also felt that, sexually, we could get better rather than worse, just like Olympic skaters improve their act together. But the thing you said about protecting the crystal is vivid. I can see how you could go through the same form and come out a different side. For example, in your last novel, *The Gospel According to the Son*, you deal with Christ's chastity. Your very knowledge of women now provides you with another prismatic direction.

**NM:** I wouldn't say that. I had trouble with Christ's chastity. When you write, there are certain things that you work to get, and there are other elements that come to you as gifts, almost out of the very mood of the writing or the momentum of the work. You have to count on things coming to you or the work is no good. And then there are parts that don't come to you, and you're not as good as you thought you'd be, so you work hard and sweat it out. Christ's chastity was not a simple matter for me. A lot of people complained about the book. They will point to one novel where He had homosexual affairs, another where He had an affair with Mary Magdalene. What they don't understand is that I never allowed it to become a temptation. I wanted to do the Christ that's presented to us in the Gospels. I was trying to understand



that story. I wanted to write that story in a way that I could understand it.

CB: You wanted to write the available story in a comprehensible way?

NM: Yes, I wanted to treat the Gospels as if they were absolute gospel, in other words, received information that could not be departed from. That difficulty was interesting. To take Christ in one or another imaginative direction would have been very easy and would have been my natural inclination.

CB: The restraint of staying faithful to the Gospels is the key to its success, I think. There's tremendous compression. You refer to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the authors of the synoptic Gospels, as scribes who didn't get it exactly right, perhaps because they wrote about Christ a half century after His death.

NM: Well, they're not scribes. Let's call them Gospel writers, because the scribes to me had a particular meaning—the people, who were in a sense the court reporters, the professional intellectuals in the temple.

CB: One of the things that interested me in your novel was how the authority of the writer was linked to the authority of Jesus. Jesus got His authority by knowing the Scriptures, by knowing the lessons of the Old Testament. He can quote what Moses said. He can quote the prophets and His authority derives from His knowledge of tradition. It is so simple that it is audacious. The opening sentence of the book—"I was the one who came down from Nazareth to be baptized by John in the River Jordan"—is direct and stirring, the voice of a human being. We're not talking about God; we're talking about the Son of God as a human being.

NM: That was my intent. What I wanted to do was treat the man in Jesus Christ, not the superman. I found the Gospels almost irritating. Obviously, if you read the Gospels, as in reading Shakespeare, you're going to get certain sentences that are part of our literary culture. But generally speaking, reading the Gospels is not an altogether agreeable experience. For one thing, they are not that fabulously well written.

CB: I knew you might say something like that.

NM: For another, Jesus is not a man in the Gospels. He's being told that God sent His Son as a human being among us, but the fact of the matter is that Jesus is a superman. He's never challenged in a way where you can feel any fear in His heart. I thought, no, no, no. Any man, even if also a god, who goes through those extreme experiences is going to feel a great deal of fear. And that was the way I wanted to treat it.

CB: In your book one thing I find incredible is that Christ Himself never says He is the Son of God. Other people say it about Him. He ques-



LINE DRAWINGS BY NORMAN MAILER

tions whether He is really the Son of God, so the final authority is always beyond Him.

NM: At least in my book, there is some doubt in His mind, not whether He is the Son of God, but He doesn't know how close God is to Him. People tend to think, well, you're the Son of God, so it's automatic.

The key thing, which is true for all profound religious experiences—not that I've necessarily had that—is that even if you're endowed with or are the representative of what everybody in places like AA calls a "higher power," this power is not always with you. It's often, signally, not there. When people have faith, they often go through excruciating experiences when they feel the absence of faith.

CB: Christ's mood comes out when His faith wavers. The variety of religious experience corresponds to the variety of human moods that are mixed in any single character. A character is not just, say, a sourpuss, but may inspire a thousand different adjectives, equally accurate. It's like the ups and downs of being in love.

NM: Very good, it's very much like being in love. There are times when there is no doubt in your mind that you are in love, and there are times when you assume the love has been withdrawn. Where is it, what happened to it? In that sense, I wanted to treat Christ the way I would treat, if you will, a saint. The first thing about saints is that they don't know all the time that they are saints.

CB: Your description of Capernaum, a town in ancient Palestine on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, reminds me of Provincetown, where the mouths of men are also painted red. Simon Peter tells Jesus how Capernaum, "though only a small city, was favored by men who did not know women but other men. So I learned that such men would cover their lips with the juice of red berries, and in the taverns they would speak of how the bravest of the Greeks were Spartans, who were great warriors but lived only to sleep in each other's arms." Jesus' disciples dispute this, and Peter says: "Spartans also live with the sword. Whereas these men of

Capernaum live with the coloring that women choose for their lips." I can't help but feel there is a little bit of Provincetown in Capernaum.

NM: How can I pretend I didn't think of Provincetown once while writing that passage? But Capernaum was known for that.

CB: I love the vivid lipstick made from "juice of red berries." You said once that talking about religion, for you, was more embarrassing than talking about sex. Another episode I love is when the disciples come to Christ, depressed about their failures to cast out demons. They lack His skill. It is a skill that exhausts Jesus. He can't cast out too many demons. There is a limit to His power. His disciples are sometimes effective, but more often they are not as good as He is in casting out demons, predicting the future, or curing lepers.

NM: That goes directly to my notion of a divine economy.

CB: Economy?

NM: Economy. In other words, in *Tough Guys* one of the happiest moments I had—I didn't write the book here but I edited it here—was when the father, Dougy Madden, was talking to the son about pro football and handicappers. The father says, "Listen, if God handicapped the football spread, He'd be right 80 percent of the time." The son asks how he arrived at that. The father says, "Well, the best handicappers, for a little while, can be up to 75 percent for a few weeks, not more. So I figure if they do 75 percent, God can do 80 percent, no trouble at all." Madden's son asks why God can't do 99 percent or 100 percent. Madden says, "Because it's easy to do 80 percent. He just passes over the teams at night and He sees what their energy is and He says the Giants are up and the Steelers are down. I'm going to pick the Giants. And He's right 80 percent of the time." So Madden's son says, "Yeah, but why can't He do it 100 percent of the time?" And the father looks at him sternly and says, "Because footballs take funny bounces."

CB: Oh, God that is funny!

NM: Then the father says to the son, "If God had to work that out, it would take 50 times more effort on His part, and it isn't worth it." So, you see, my feeling has always been that the divine economy is very much with us all the time, but not totally, not totally, because the gods must focus and do not have complete powers. They have what they have, and it can be immense, but they don't have more than that. I employ that principle all through *The Gospel According to the Son*, which is that God has other things to do besides taking care of His Son down here.

CB: So the ethical is limited by a need to balance sacred energy on the fulcrum of divine purpose? My belief is that God didn't create us, we created Him, but that may sound like blasphemy to you.



**NM:** Well, that is beyond my purchase, and I don't want to get into it. What I will say is that if we take the notion that God is capable of doing everything and anything at any given moment, it takes away the last of our human dignity. I much prefer the notion that God is just doing the best that He or She can do, or that it's a marriage that They can do. I've never believed, for one moment, that God intervenes at every moment and takes care of everything. So my god is an existential god, a god that does the best that can be done under the circumstances. A tired general will not always prevail. I wanted to get across in the Gospel that when Jesus removed demons from people, He didn't do it for nothing. It cost Him a great deal. He was as exhausted as a magician after a long night of performance.

**CB:** Speaking of performance, the 1996 cover subject of *Provincetown Arts*, Karen Finley, told me she decided to become a performance artist when, as a teenager, she witnessed speeches at the Democratic convention in Chicago in 1968, when people like Abbie Hoffman and Allen Ginsberg were giving these emotional rallies before large audiences. She saw them as an art form. The whole concept of performance art started in this political realm. In other words, there was a perception about politics as theater. In your book, *Of a Fire on the Moon*, about the Apollo moon shot, you have a concluding section called "A Burial by the Sea." A broken-down car is buried in a P'town backyard.

**NM:** Half-buried.

**CB:** Half-buried. It's almost like a religious ceremony. Heaten Vorse quoted from the Song of Solomon. Somebody else read from Numbers.

**NM:** Eddie Bonetti read from a poem he'd written about this car that had been poorly conceived: "Duarte Motors giveth, and terminal craftsmanship taketh away." You're right, but I wouldn't call it a religious ceremony, it was a quasi-religious ceremony. It was more moving and more sacramental, in an odd way, than anyone expected. Everything about it was bizarre. My friends, the Bankos, had this hole dug by a bulldozer, and the bulldozer pushed in the car. It sank halfway, and the half that stood up looked so much like a bug coming out of the earth that Jack Kearney welded on antennae, pieces of metal that became antennae. Really it looked like the biggest beetle you've ever seen.

**CB:** A ghastly beast—I saw it at the time. I went earlier today to look at the site.

**NM:** They took it away.

**CB:** It looked like there was a mound in the earth and they put some vegetation over it.

**NM:** Maybe they decided it was cheaper to cover it with dirt and grow something.

**CB:** One of these days I'm going to go over there with a shovel and see if it's still there, but I worry about disturbing the bones of the dead. I did



*Picasso said that the act of meeting me when he was a very young man was one of the most exceptional and determining events of his life. I concur.*

EDITOR'S NOTE MAILER WAS OF COURSE TOO YOUNG TO HAVE KNOWN PICASSO WHEN THE ARTIST WAS A YOUNG MAN

think the section in your book is interesting for the ceremony and the invocation of religious language at a time when, as you say, marriages were breaking up. Five marriages that you witnessed that summer.

**NM:** And one of them was mine.

**CB:** You connected this with the moon shot, as if our lunar assault was destroying our ability to sustain love.

**NM:** I was married at the time to Beverly Bentley, and I've never known a human being who was as sensitive to the moon as Beverly. Whenever there was a full moon, I dreaded it, because about two in the morning she couldn't sleep and she'd go out on our deck—at that time we were living at 565 Commercial Street—and she'd bellow at the moon. She'd say, "Oh, Moon! Don't you pretend that I am not looking at you! I am looking at you, Moon, so you can speak to me!" She'd go on and on with that, not out of her mind, just very enjoyably half out of her mind, and loving it and half believing it. She always had a prodigious imagination. If a small cloud passed in front of the full moon, that to her was a sign. Our marriage broke up that summer. And I felt: let's not say the moon had nothing to do with it.

We had landed on the moon, after all, which I felt was a great violation because it was done without ceremony, down at NASA, where they could have apologized for landing on the moon. Primitives used to do that. If they cut down a giant tree, they were all too aware that tree had a spirit, which I suspect is true. I think all great, noble trees do have spirits. I think little trees have spirits too, but it's the old story of divine economy—their spirits can't get too much together. But a giant tree can mean something. So

when a tribe cut down a giant tree, a religious ceremony was invoked. Of course, NASA never did that. There was never one moment when the people at NASA said, "We recognize that the moon has been a source of endless stimulation to generations of poets, and is deep in the culture of the West, not to mention other cultures, and so we are very proud of landing on the moon, but we also apologize to those powers in the universe about whom we know nothing if they have been disturbed." Can you imagine the poor bureaucrat who wrote that speech and delivered it? He wouldn't have been long at NASA. There was something so cold, so steely, so mechanical about NASA. That is one of the reasons it never captured the public imagination. Think about what a feat it was. Yet there was no spirit, no sense of awe about invading our symbol of madness, mystery, gestation, and recurrence.

**CB:** The lawyers have a term, "excited utterance," to describe statements said under the compulsion of an emotional moment. The astronauts had no quotable excited utterances—no surprise of the heart.

**NM:** Nothing but "a small step for man and a mighty step for mankind." It's not that good a quote, nothing remarkable. It doesn't reach. But a requirement of NASA was to be deadly dull. These astronauts, however, had a double life. They all had Corvettes in those days and they would drive at 100 miles an hour down those Texas highways, one foot away from each other. When they cut up, they cut up. I'm not talking about Armstrong, Aldrin, and Collins, who were on Apollo 11, because they were probably the purest of the pure, looking back on it. They took the three most dependable guys for that shot. Let's say they took the six or nine guys out of the pool of 25, or whatever they had, and said, "Among these nine are the guys we can count on." And when they had those three, they said, "This is a very good three. Let's go with them."

**CB:** To be conscious of the excitement would have been a distraction from working.

**NM:** The work was prodigious. The amount of detailed work tended to keep them from getting excited. Also, the whole idea was not to be excited. If you get excited, the awe of the experience is going to weigh on you, and we don't want that. In order not to feel fear, you've got to explore every realm of the unknown technologically, which they did. They were made completely familiar about every aspect of the job, but ultimately some essence was completely unfamiliar.

**CB:** I want to make a connection between the moon and the spirituality in a work of art. I grew up, with an artist for a father, valuing art as a vessel for spirituality. Of the painters you've known in Provincetown, can you say something about discussions you had with them? For many years, Robert Motherwell was a close neighbor.

I remember seeing you at the National Arts Club in New York when Motherwell gave a speech following the award of a medal. You were in the front row listening to every difficult syllable he uttered.

**NM:** Motherwell was an immensely intelligent and cultured man. But we never had a serious discussion. We weren't that close, and there was a kind of a tradition among those painters never to talk about art. If some of the artists got drunk, they occasionally may have had a private argument about art between two of them. There were forums at the Art Association but I don't remember anything remarkable being said. What mattered was the presence of the artists.

Maybe one reason I never got into a discussion about modern art with them is that I always felt such conversations never went anywhere. How far can words carry an artist? To this day, I find most writing about art to be poetic explorations that depart very quickly from the experience of looking at the painting. The writer goes off on some inner collaboration with his or her own experience. The painting becomes like a distant object from which one is receding at a great rate in one's vehicle of metaphor. I find that terribly tiresome. On the other hand, technical writing about art—the nature of the pigments used, and the method of their application—while useful, is not going to stop anyone's traffic. Perhaps there are more painters worth writing about than there are writers worth writing about—that's a large remark, but it comes out of my general impression.

Maybe there are a thousand painters in America you could take seriously, but I don't know if there are a thousand such writers here. I don't know. But I do think that when you write about painting without involving yourself with the life of the painter, I'm not sure the criticism has the same value as it may when you are reviewing a book or doing a piece of literary criticism. If you have 10 people reading a book and you have 10 people looking at a given painting, an important painting, let's say, the variations in reaction to the book are going to be much more circumscribed than the variations received from looking at the painting. Painting does not lend itself to critical language. Rather it's a springboard to all sorts of sensations, emotions, metaphors, indulgences, new concepts—whatever—but it's as if each of these people is exploded out from the work. That is the excitement of painting. You go to see a painting to be shifted, startled, moved into new awareness. Whereas, very often with a work of literature what you are looking for is more resonance than one's own thought. To a degree that we learn about the life of someone else, which you can get out of a good book, we understand the life we would otherwise never have come near to. So we are larger, more resonant within.

**CB:** When you were doing your interpretive biography of Picasso you must have thought hard about the issue you just articulated—the limits of what you can say, verbally, about a visual experience. When did it occur to you that you had the ability to do that book, especially your ability to substantiate your assertions in actual descriptions of Picasso's paintings? That, to me, was the accomplishment: locating your insights in the work itself.

**NM:** Thirty years before I started that book I signed a contract to do a book on Picasso. It never went anywhere. I ended up writing a 200-page philosophical dialogue that was published in *Cannibals and Christians*. Looking at reproductions of Picasso's work for two months at the Museum of Modern Art stimulated that writing. But I wasn't ready to write about Picasso. I didn't know enough about him. I really didn't know his life. He stimulated, sent me on a long, wonderful voyage, and I honored him for it. But I wasn't ready to write about him. Over those 30 years many good books and bad books were written about him. By now I had developed a sense of the honor and the shoddy in another writer's style. You get a very good sense of the part of the writing that has integrity and the part that is meretricious. This is true for all writers, even the very best.

I'll show you in Shakespeare a hell of a lot of meretricious writing. Parenthetically, what Shakespeare loved was having wonderful lines of dialogue, back and forth, and wonderful monologues. So he'd bring people together to produce this language. It had nothing to do with reality—which may be one of the reasons Tolstoy hated Shakespeare so much. Shakespeare was not interested in reality or morality, as an intimate matter. He was only interested in morality for its relation to language.

To come back to what I was saying, you can find the meretricious in a writer no matter how great they are. You can find it in Proust where he is needlessly long at a given moment, until finally his virtues become his vice because he's so good at it. Certainly, when you are reading an average good writer, what's fascinating is where they are telling the truth, as you see it, and where they are not, where they are fudging it. If you've been a writer all your life you do have quite an authority there. You are not unlike some high ecclesiastic who decides that the evidence here is such that we will or will not call this woman a saint. There are standards, intimations, instincts you've developed that give you a wonderful sense of when someone is having a sincere religious experience and when they are having a false one. With writers, if you know how to read them, and it may take being a writer for 50 years, then you see through the writing to where they know a lot and where they don't. And that inspires your own writing, illumines it.

One reason I was able to write the biography of Picasso 30 years later is because of all the

books written in between that I could read and study and get a great deal out of. Not only good books, but ones where I could say I think I understand Picasso better than they do. Of course there is a tremendous amount of bad writing about Picasso by some of the most established writers about him—they love being academics about his work, and that's not the way to go to Picasso.

**CB:** You make clear that for Picasso, creation itself is a violent act. When you speak about dullness in the imagination of NASA, sometimes I think your idea of a good party is to invite the enemies of your friends.

**NM:** No, only certain enemies.

**CB:** I'm teasing.

**NM:** Norris, my wife, thinks my idea of a good party is when I do all the talking.

**CB:** You've found a woman equal to you in terms of her centeredness. Even though you've been married six times, you've now been married to Norris longer than most people have been married at all.

**NM:** We've been married 20 years and have been together about 25 years.

**CB:** And when did you learn she was born on January 31st, the same day as you?

**NM:** First night.

**CB:** That must have been a shocker.

**NM:** It was curious. We looked so unlike and were so different that it was interesting to have something in common. But it wouldn't have mattered what her birthday was. Over time I've learned that we not only have the same virtues, but the same faults.

**CB:** Do you remember a woman named Cinnamon Brown? Rumors say you know of her.

**NM:** Yeah, sure. That look of panic you just saw in my eyes was me asking myself if there were two Cinnamon Browns.

**CB:** You cast Norris in this role of Cinnamon Brown, at a small party in New York, dressed in a blonde wig and brazen makeup, and introduced her as a girl from the South who'd come north to enter the skin-flick business.

**NM:** The real art was that we did it with two extremely sophisticated people, Harold and Mara Conrad. Mara was one of the smartest, hippest women I've ever known. The idea was precisely to fool her. As I remember, Harold was in on it, or I don't think we could have pulled it off.

**CB:** I once pulled a fast one like that, taking a woman, Mary Boyle, to an all-men's club in Provincetown, the Beachcombers, for a Saturday night dinner. Women are not allowed; so Mary put a theatrical corset around her chest, removed her false teeth, and put her hair under a beret. I introduced Mary at the Beachcombers



as a guy I'd picked up hitchhiking in Bourne. His name, I said, was Marty Anus, a French name pronounced "a-NEW" and spelled Anous, but vulgar Americans always mispronounced it. All these guys bought it.

**NM:** No doubt they were drunk—the real test at the Beachcombers is the ability to hold your booze.

**CB:** I know you could match them.

**NM:** Well, I got there a little too late, too old. I realized that to enjoy this I had to be able to drink on Saturday night the way I used to in the old days. I can't do that anymore.

**CB:** So much of your knowledge of the body comes from an interest in sports, especially the dynamic balance of a performing athlete. Your characters, both within themselves and with others, are moving through complicated turns, where they are at once off balance and in balance, yet the center of gravity is maintained in evolving alignments.

**NM:** The turn for me came in the '60s. In the first half of the '60s I was doing my best to give up smoking, and my style changed, starting with *An American Dream*. I smoked two packs a day for years and was addicted for 20 years when I started to give it up at the age of 33, in 1956. It took me the next 10 years to give it up totally. It was very hard to write when I was giving up cigarettes. Smoking enables you to cerebrate at a high, almost feverish rate. Your brain is faster when you smoke cigarettes, which is why working intellectuals, particularly, do hate giving up their addiction. I discovered, yes, I had much more trouble finding the word I wanted, but the rhythms were now better. Before I had been writing more like a computer, if you will, imparting direct information, stating things. Gradually I learned a more roundabout way of discovering the meaning of a sentence, rather than knowing it before I started. Also I began to write in longhand, rather than with a typewriter. Writing became more of a physical act, with more flow to it, but with less cerebation in each sentence. I attribute the development of a second style to giving up smoking.

**CB:** Out of necessity. It took you a full decade to get comfortable writing without smoking?

**NM:** I suffered greatly for years, which gave something to the new style, because when you're suffering, to get the writing out when your mind is not entirely clear, you truly have to work on clarity.

**CB:** Much of the new clarity didn't exist before. I was just reading what James Baldwin said about "The White Negro," which you published in *Advertisements for Myself*. He felt he couldn't understand what you were talking about.

**NM:** He may not have agreed, but I think he understood. He was saying, "How dare you write about black experience?" That irritated the hell out of me. I said, "Jimmy, how dare you

write about white experience?" In *Giovanni's Room* he had written about two white boys. My whole feeling was, of course, we can cross over. Is a man never to write about a woman? Is a woman never to write about a man?

**CB:** The right to write about another's consciousness is what's at stake.

**NM:** If we can't do that, we may be doomed as a species. That is a large remark. But unless we are truly able to comprehend cultures that are initially alien to us, I don't know if we are going to make it. This applies to all sorts of things. If we can't begin to imagine the anxiety and pain and disorder that is caused in all parts of the cosmos by birds dying in the oil of the Exxon disaster, or if only a third of us can recognize that, then worse things will happen. What terrifies me about human nature is our stupidity at the highest levels. For example, all the Y2K crap going on now—what was going on in those guys' heads that they couldn't look 50 years ahead? And now we are going to go into cloning, fooling with the gene stream? If we can make an error like Y2K and not be able to see in advance what the mistake will do, in the very system these guys developed and invented, then I am terrified. As an extension, the idea that you can't write about things you haven't immediately experienced is odious to me. There is much too much journalism in our lives now. I remember when I did the biography of Marilyn Monroe; the first question everyone asked me was "Did you know her?" I'd say no. Immediately the shades would come down on interview shows. In effect, if you didn't know her, what you wrote about her was not worth reading.

**CB:** Did you know Christ? No, He was before your time.

**NM:** The odd notion that only direct human experience is worth writing about is a sign of how much the media has taken over from literature. I'm arguing the opposite, that novelists, in this technological time, occupy the same position that high priests used to have.

**CB:** There you said what I was trying to hear.

**NM:** I believe it. You need an awful amount of luck to be a novelist, and I have had a lot in my life. I didn't have to spend half of my 50 years of writing earning a living at things I didn't want to do, which is killing to talent. This ability to reinvent cultures, to make imaginative works of them that are more real than any pieces of journalism, is crucial to our continuation. For many years I felt we were just scribblers and it didn't mean a damn thing. What I was recognizing was that what we write doesn't change anything. Everything I detest has gotten stronger in the last 30 or 40 years: plastic, airplane interiors, modern architecture, and suburban sprawl. One of the things I like about Provincetown is that it hasn't changed that much, it hasn't been poisoned the way cities like Hyannis have been ruined. I've come around to feeling that what we do as writers is essential and important. Con-

sciousness is enlarged gently and delicately, yet powerfully, and it takes great literature, like great music, painting, and dance, to make that happen. I've come to believe that the function of the novelist is more important now than ever, precisely because the serious novel is in danger of becoming extinct.

**CB:** If we connect these remarks to your novel about Jesus we see that the source of His wisdom resides in the parabolic language that He uses even more skillfully than the Devil.

**NM:** One of the reasons I don't altogether enjoy talking about that book is that it is not altogether my book. Some of the best lines in the book come from the Gospels. When you write a book, you want to be able to take credit for it. *The Gospel According to the Son*—only half-credit. *The Executioner's Song*, which a lot of people think is my best book, I also can't take whole credit for. I didn't write that incredible plot. God or the forces of human history put that story together.

**CB:** Shakespeare took almost all of his plots from secondhand sources, such as Holinshed's *Chronicles*. He absorbed history and earlier versions of his plays as cultural documents, then fully re-imagined them.

**NM:** You either write your own story or you don't. The story, in novel writing, is a powerful element. There are very few great stories and I would like to think that I came up with a great story once or twice. But I don't know I have, except when I have borrowed them, such as the Gospels or Gary Gilmore's story.

**CB:** Borrowed stories are embedded in the culture's legends. Newborn babies are not original, yet each generation values them nonetheless.

**NM:** It's one thing to take legends and bring them to life, to the best of your ability—it's a high activity and I'm very happy to have done a little of it. But I go back to what I'm saying: my real excitement is when I do it myself, when I'm not dealing with a legend, when I make up the story, as I did in *Ancient Evenings* and *Harlot's Ghost* or *The Deer Park* and *An American Dream*. Those novels give me more pleasure, when I think about them, than when I think about *The Gospel According to the Son*, where the difficult thing was to bring a legend to life.

**CB:** With *Ancient Evenings* you're dealing with an Egyptian culture more than a thousand years before Christ. We had lunch at Napi's a few weeks ago and you were telling me about the research you did for that book at the annex to the New York Public Library, leafing through a huge book depicting the Battle of Kadesh, the first battle recorded in history, recorded in drawings.

**NM:** That book is called the *Lepsius Denkmahler*. It was published in Leipzig about



1838, soon after the first major discoveries in Egypt, and the Germans were absolutely wild on the subject. Ancient roots! It gave one a great sense of how they used to print books 150 years ago, as opposed to how they do now. Boy, they printed books in those days. The pages were approximately 30 inches long and maybe 15 inches high, and when you opened it—heavy, stiff buckram covers—and turned a page, it was like coming about in an old catboat in a light wind. The thick canvas mainsail lopes over.

**CB:** Here we have a picture of you doing research and enjoying the research.

**NM:** Not all research is that enjoyable. In the *Lepsius Denkmahler* you go through maybe 100 pages of tomb drawings on all the details of the battle of Kadesh. You'll see donkeys screwing each other, men fighting, a horse nosing out a soldier's food he shouldn't be eating in an encampment.

**CB:** To count the dead, the hands of the fallen are cut off and massed in a big pile, and a lion eats these hands, crunching the bones, and gets so sick he dies. Is that depicted in the drawings?

**NM:** I forget where that detail came from. I don't think I made it up, but I might have. I don't know. The research all goes into the book, and I don't want to take it along with me when I'm finished. I want to empty my mind for the next piece of research.

**CB:** On your desk here are stacked the works of Goethe, along with a big German dictionary. You are presently learning German to read *Faust* in the original. You are an old dog who learns new tricks. Learning for you is connected with imaginative expansion.

**NM:** The mind is like a muscle. If you exercise your brain, it stays more in working order, as you get older, than if you don't exercise it. I once wrote: "There was that law of life, so cruel and so just, that one must grow or else pay more for remaining the same." That's near the end of *The Deer Park*. Generally, when you write a good line, it is for others to lead their lives by, because you've already discovered the meaning. This line is something I live by. Whenever I'm getting lazy, this is the line I whip myself with. "Stay lazy, buddy." I tell myself, "and you'll be gone pretty quick."

*Christopher Busa is the founder and director of Provincetown Arts Press. He is the editor of The Journals of Myron Stout, forthcoming from the Press.*

## Crow's Nest Cottages, North Truro, 1946

by Robert F. Lucid

*The following excerpt is taken from the forthcoming first volume of Robert F. Lucid's three-volume, authorized biography of Norman Mailer. The excerpt picks up the narrative of Mailer's life starting in April 1946, tracing his sea voyage home after combat in the Philippines and occupation duty in Japan, through discharge, reunion with his family and removal to North Truro where he began work on his first published novel. Lucid's first volume, which will cover Mailer's life through the 1950s, is expected to appear in a year or so.*

Whenever Norman crossed the Pacific he seemed somehow to be beating against the prevailing winds. His first crossing should have been wintry and oppressive: in December 1944, *The Sea Barb* took him out from a storybook San Francisco setting into what he and his pessimistic shipmates feared would be as much as four years of mortal danger and destruction. But such had been his interior state that he rose lightly above the oppression and, writing his endless letter to his wife, Bea, had seemed almost spring-like in his mood. Now, 16 months later, his April return crossing on the *USS Grant* should have been a lark, the scene of a re-birth festival fore and aft; but there is no evidence that he did any celebrating or wrote a word to anyone, and the ship's sergeant of the guard—Clifford Maskovsky—reports that Private Mailer had been a stormy, anger-driven passenger.

Maskovsky's first task, in his unenvied and unadmired assignment, was to sort out the enlisted-man population on his section of the *Grant* into sub-groups that could be identified and in turn assigned guard duty and other make-work tasks. But apparently the men had swarmed aboard, seizing their bunks on a first come first served basis, and then refused to identify themselves at roll call. So Maskovsky, who clearly was not a battalion sergeant major for nothing, roused them all out of bed and fell them in on deck, discovered their identities one on one, and assigned them bunks and a duty schedule according to the ship's official rosters. None of the men liked it very much, but neither did any react to this display of authority with Norman's furious anger. Maskovsky could not understand why his old comrade cursed him up one side and down the other so violently; it was almost as if Norman was trying to provoke some kind of disciplinary retaliation. Far from retaliating, however, the puzzled non-com tried to mollify his antagonist with a cushy assignment—the easiest job available. Instead of the guard-duty rotation required of almost everybody else, Norman was put for the whole of the voyage in charge of candy-bar distribution.

There is no record of how well he accomplished this, the last military assignment of his career, but we do know that on the ten-day

crossing Norman addressed himself to the novel-writing task ahead by rereading *Anna Karenina*. His reading seems to have screened-out most of the rest of the shipboard experience, but there was one thing he remembers finding quite hard to take. The nakedness of his uniform, in a population where all the other men were decorated with every badge and insignia that their military records allowed, immediately became intolerable to him. This was confirmed when the ship arrived on April 24 in Seattle, where he went immediately to a supply store and bought an overseas-cap trimmed with the yellow piping that identified the wearer as a veteran of the cavalry. Then he wired Bea from the Puget Sound clearing station at Fort Lawton (his first sentence drawing upon their secret erotica vocabulary, wherein they gave jocular code names to their genitalia): "Tell Juno [that the] Dartmouth Ensign landed in Seattle today with Norman in tow. Thursday we start for Fort Dix. Out of the Army May 3 latest. Will phone from Dix. Get room at Palms starting April 30. Or Pierrepont. I love you Pooch.—Norman"

The next day his jam-packed troop train pulled out of Seattle's King Street station and for six days rolled raucously across the continent, while harried Military Police tried to control the drunken, non-stop celebration. It would be the last journey he shared with Maskovsky—who never forgave the way Norman had treated him—and during it they did not spend much time together. On May 2 Norman was discharged at Fort Dix—two years, one month and six days after entering the army—where he was given \$117.91 cash mustering-out and travel money, a discharge certificate, and a "ruptured duck" honorable discharge button for his lapel. Four days later, Bea reported to the naval separation unit in New York City to be formally detached from active duty as a lieutenant, j.g., in the Waves, and within a month the couple was in North Truro, just outside Provincetown, in a cottage dedicated, at least for the most part, to the making of fiction.

Before repairing to the Cape, Norman addressed a primary piece of literary business. He had not accepted the William Morris Agency reassignment to another agent, so he went alone to call on someone who, back in August of 1944, he had interviewed in company with his then-agent, Berta Kaslow. It was Robert N. Linscott, the Random House senior editor who had been the only person in publishing moved by Norman's "A Transit to Narcissus" to make him an actual offer. At the time, Norman had of course declined the small advance and the contract for right of refusal for his first publishable manuscript, but now he carefully laid out his plan for the new novel, asking if Random House might be interested in offering a contract for it. Linscott's ready reply came as an unwelcome,



and indeed frightening shock: the current publishing wisdom, the editor explained, was that there was no market for war novels. All surveys of the reading public showed that the war was the last thing audiences wanted to encounter in their reading, and, in the friendliest way, he urged Norman to reconsider his plan.

Norman left Linscott's office thoroughly alarmed, but he did not do the obvious thing: he refrained from turning to any of his other already established contacts in the world of publishing. Story magazine's Whit Burnett had his own imprint at Lippincott, Edwin Seaver was connected with the I. B. Fischer Company through his Cross-Section annuals and was an officer at The Book-of-the-Month-Club, and Ted Ammussen had now risen to a senior position at Rinehart. Despite whatever small differences he may have developed with any of them, all of these people would certainly have been willing to advise Norman, who also might have contacted a more modest publishing player: his sister Barbara's one-time roommate at Radcliffe, Adeline Lubell. She had graduated from Radcliffe in the spring of 1945 at the age of 19, and was now a precocious junior editor at Boston's Little, Brown, and Company, in which capacity she had sent to Norman in Japan a cluster of three self-asserting letters concerning the possibility of reviewing "A Transit to Narcissus" for publication. The letters made it clear that Barbara's circle at Radcliffe bore a strong resemblance to her original Norman Mailer Admirer Society on Crown Street, and while Norman never sent Adeline the "Transit" manuscript, he answered her letters in a way that showed pointed appreciation of her obvious interest in him.

But after his Linscott interview Norman did not try to contact any of these people. It was as if the Random House senior editor—who was at that time a far more prominent publishing figure than anybody else known to Norman—had persuaded him that there really was a consensus in the publishing world concerning the undesirability of war novels; one that could be overcome only by the pages of a powerful manuscript. Not that Norman was deciding to write his whole novel on the speculation that, when finished, its manuscript would prove irresistibly publishable. This, after all, was what he had done with "Transit," and the two-year, serial rejection of that novel was painfully fresh in his memory. Though he was sure that his peace of mind required him to have a contract for the new novel, Norman felt that to get one he had to have something to show a potential publisher. So he planned to spend the summer getting as much of his book on paper as he could, and then to negotiate a contract—probably with Little, Brown—based on this sample.

Their mission completely clear, Norman and Bea moved into the Cape Cod cottage in mid-June, where Norman immediately resumed his preparations for composition. His first notebook, headed simply War Novel, was dated May 19, [19]46, and opens with an inventory of selections from his army letters file. Going on from that kind of material, the Harvard engineer now

devoted himself for almost a month to blueprinting the project. He started 3 x 5 card files on each of the 20 initially identified characters, adding cards as ideas about them developed. Soon the tightly packed card-file was six inches thick. He listed the 20 names in a column on 20 sheets of paper, and then assigned each character a sheet listing that character's view of the other 19. He drew up chart after chart, diagramming lines of relationship between the characters overall, and within various sub-groupings. In the margins of the charts he would list themes both major and minor, stated and unstated, to show how each character connected to them. He even drew a careful 8.5 x 11 picture of Anopopei—the "ocarina-shaped" island his Americans were invading—with topographical details that located Mt. Anaka as well as the deployed military forces of both sides.

Amid these preparations, Bea settled them into their Crow's Nest cottage in North Truro, which they were renting for 40 dollars a week. She formed a strategic alliance with Mr. and Mrs. Barnes, their amiable landlords, who guided her as she scoured the area on her bicycle for basic foodstuffs. Canned goods like tunafish and salmon were especially scarce, there was no butter, and shortening such as Crisco had to be got by special arrangement. Fresh fish and chicken were plentiful, however, and the larder was enhanced by extravagant packages from both families, who also rented neighboring cottages when they came to visit in mid-July. Setting a pattern that would last for the rest of his life, Norman successfully separated his social time out from his hours devoted to writing, and enjoyed playing host to a steady stream of guests—including some friends from the army. Given the priority of her husband's need to obtain a contract, Bea seems largely or perhaps entirely to have put aside her own novel-planning for the summer.

Norman took the plunge sometime in the second week of July, with an opening sentence that would remain the same through almost 15 months of composition, revision, reexamination and rewrite:

Nobody could sleep.

From there, his little Remington portable typewriter—a mustering-out present from his mother—steadily clattered out better than 25 pages a week for the rest of the summer. They recorded the first sections of the first version of how an understrength platoon from a headquarters reconnaissance company—after a sleepless all-night wait—goes ashore as part of an invasion force under the command of a Major General named Cummings to re-capture an obscure, ocarina-shaped little island named Anopopei.

Towards the end of the summer, with almost 200 pages done, Norman and Bea got an invitation to an afternoon tea party at Adeline Lubell's house in Cambridge, and they unhesitatingly took the ferry across Boston Harbor to attend. Norman seems to have spent most of the afternoon talking to his attentive hostess, and when she followed up the meeting with a letter offering to review the manuscript for Little, Brown,

he was quick to accept. His working text was rough-typed, heavy with strike-overs, but between them Norman and Bea prepared a fairly clean copy of some 50 thousand words on 186 pages, and had it delivered to Adeline early in the first week of September. At this stage Norman was still a little uncertain about the title—his very first idea had been to call the book "The Dark Cloud"—so at the last minute he removed the cover-sheet identifying his novel-in-progress as *The Naked and the Dead*.

Two years later, in a discarded section of an early draft of *Barbary Shore*, Norman—who had been broken in rank from sergeant to private just before sailing—recalls the shipboard experience:

I had to recognize that if I hated the Army I could not very well wear its ribbons and badges for they were intrinsic with it, part of the game to catch you from behind. And so I took off my ribbons before I sailed for home, and went back as one of the very few privates left in the U.S. Army. And there, on the boat, I had my suffering.

I don't think I have ever felt as insignificant in my life. Without my stripes and my colors I was nothing. That fabulous adjustment I had made to the Army had been glued to them, and I tore off the soldier with them. I felt like a rookie on the boat, and I had the same puckerings of inferiority when I passed a man with a Combat Badge. I had thrown mine away with some insight perhaps of the temptation there would be to assume the decorations again, and it was fortunate for I would have lasted a day if they had been in my barracks bag. I went out of the army naked as I had gone in, but it was without pride.

In accord with standard army practice, his cash payment included only one-third of the total \$300 mustering-out pay due him. He would get the other \$200 mailed to him at home. It is noteworthy that Norman seems to have persuaded the clerk who typed out the Honorable Discharge certificate to record him as being discharged from the 112th Cavalry Regiment rather than from the scene of his final humiliation, the 649th Ordinance Ammunition Company.

*Robert F. Lucid, who took early retirement from the University of Pennsylvania's English Department to devote himself full-time to his biography of Norman Mailer, has edited two earlier Mailer volumes: Norman Mailer: The Man and His Work, and The Long Patrol: 25 Years of Writing From the Work of Norman Mailer. In an association with Mailer that has lasted over 40 years, Lucid has published numerous essays about him, served as a consultant on a variety of film and research projects, functioned as his original archivist and is now an executor of Mailer's literary estate. Lucid lives on the University of Pennsylvania campus in Philadelphia.*

# Works and Days

by J. Michael Lennon and Donna Pedro Lennon

\*  
 I had lived through the <sup>upside</sup> of mountains  
 in ~~Criminology~~ (and then ~~crossed~~, through the ~~side~~  
 full of oceans, the life and death of  
 great ~~for~~ and ~~swamp~~, dinosaurs  
 had passed over ~~starting~~ ~~imagined~~ and  
 their bones had ~~compacted~~ ~~on~~ ~~to~~ the ~~surface~~  
 of the ~~land~~ ~~rock~~, the glaciers had come and  
 gone ~~making~~ ~~the~~ ~~land~~ ~~library~~ ~~to~~  
 the ~~mouth~~ ~~and~~ ~~side~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~mouth~~  
 and ~~feeding~~ ~~the~~ ~~mouth~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~mouth~~  
 again, ~~Martha's~~ ~~Vineyard~~ had ~~passed~~ ~~the~~ ~~mouth~~  
 and ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~center~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~mouth~~  
 northern, ~~here~~ ~~of~~ ~~Cape~~ ~~and~~ ~~on~~ ~~the~~ ~~mouth~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~mouth~~

DETAIL OF ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT OF TOUGH GUYS DON'T DANCE

1984

The following consists of two excerpts from Norman Mailer: *Works and Days*, a bio-bibliography chronicling Mailer's professional career. The ambition of the Lennons' study is to nominate, delineate, annotate, and cross-reference every significant Mailer utterance in print in English, as well as the chief events of his life to date. It will be published in late 1999 or early 2000. The entries chosen provide perspective on Mailer's 1984 novel *Tough Guys Don't Dance*, set in Provincetown, and the subsequent film based on the novel, shot in Provincetown and the surrounding area which Mailer directed.

**84.1** "Mailer Will Star with His Movies." Article-interview by Nan Robertson. *New York Times*, 19 January, Sec. C, p. 17. Mailer discusses the making of "Maidstone" (71.28) on the occasion of its showing, along with his 1967 film, "Beyond the Law," and a documentary, "Norman Mailer: A Sanction to Write," produced by Jeffrey Van Davis, at the Thalia Theater in New York. Mailer tells Robertson his current opinion of "Maidstone": "Now I think it's a terribly flawed and imperfect movie that's really interesting for people who are obsessed by film. The production is an interesting idea, made by a man who didn't know how to make movies." See 81.19, 84.3.

**84.2** "Tough Guys Don't Dance: An Exclusive Interview with Norman Mailer." Article-interview by Luke Breit. *Poet News: Sacramento's Literary Calendar and Review*, April, 1-3, 5, 7. Telephone interview. Mailer comments on a number of matters including feminism, architecture,

how he came to translate (with his daughter Susan) Federico García Lorca's "Lament for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías" (67.22), President Reagan and Russia, and, at great length, the reviews of *Ancient Evenings* (83.18). His comments on Reagan and Russia lie at the heart of his motivation for several future projects: "I think when Reagan called Russia 'an evil force,' he did the worst possible single thing he could have done in terms of bringing our countries closer together. Nothing could have driven them further apart." Finally, Mailer describes the forthcoming *Tough Guys Don't Dance* (84.17), set in Provincetown, as a novel "written in an entirely American idiom." Lorca's translated poem accompanies the interview.

**84.3** "Mailer Evening? Well, Maybe...One Hour Was Norman on Film." Article by Lee Dykas. *Providence Journal*, 16 April, Sec. A, p. 1. Report on Mailer's appearance at Sayles Hall, Brown University, where he answered questions after showing a documentary film about him made by Jeffrey Van Davis. He stated that *Ancient Evenings* (83.18) "may have to stand alone" because he might not write volumes two and three of the planned trilogy. See 84.1.

**84.4** "Tough Guys Don't Dance." *Vanity Fair*, May, 74-90, 105-06. Advance excerpt from novel of same title (84.17). Accompanied by Irving Penn's photograph of Mailer. Rpt: Appearing six months before the novel, this excerpt consists of chapters 1 and 2 of the published novel, with only a few small changes.

**84.5** "Mailer Muses on Marriage and Updike." Article by unidentified writer. *USA Today*, 31 May. Brief comments by Mailer on Hilary Mills' biography (82.23) and John Updike's style, which is mentioned in *Tough Guys Don't Dance* (84.17). Mailer made his comments at a Washington, DC party given by his publisher to launch 84.17. See 83.32, 83.50, 84.6, 84.8, 84.30.

**84.6** "Mailer Presides Over a Novel Launching." Article-interview by John Blades. *Chicago Tribune*, 31 May, Sec. 5, p. 9. Longer report on the Washington, DC dinner for book editors given by Random House to promote the forthcoming *Tough Guys Don't Dance* (84.17). Mailer reports that he was "shocked" that Little, Brown, to whom he owed a book under a previous contract, didn't like 84.17; Random House took it over as the first book under its new contract with Mailer. Mailer says he would like "to write a western as good as Ed Doctorow's *Welcome to Hard Times* and Walter Van Tilburg Clark's *The Ox-Bow Incident*," but not a romance, because "D.H. Lawrence did it all when it came to romance." See 84.5, 84.8, 84.30.

**84.7** "Tough Guys Don't Dance." *Vanity Fair*, June, 74-90, 110. Advance excerpt from novel of same title (84.17). Accompanied by Irving Penn's photograph of Mailer. Rpt: Appearing five months before the novel, this excerpt covers pages 81-126, or most of chapters 4 and 5 of the novel as published, with eight excisions of a line or two.

**84.8** "Publishing: Mailer Talks About His New Thriller." Article-interview by Edwin McDowell. *New York Times*, 8 June, Sec. C, p. 28. Another, and the most complete, account of the Random House dinner in Washington, DC given to promote the forthcoming 84.17. Mailer described the murder mystery as being "like an illegitimate baby—it was written in two months, therefore born out of wedlock, and I'm struck by the fact that the event took place." See 84.5, 84.6, 84.30.

**84.9** "Norman Mailer Elected PEN President." *PEN American Center Newsletter*, no. 54 (summer), 1. 185-word excerpt from Mailer's statement on the importance of PEN given at the PEN annual meeting, 11 July. Mailer says that "writers can speak to one another across the world more quickly than can governments." His term ran 1984-86.

**84.10** "An Excerpt [from *Tough Guys Don't Dance*]." *USA Today*, 27 July, Sec. D, p. 3. Accompanying John D. MacDonald's review is this brief excerpt from the last page of chapter 2 of 84.17, detailing Tim Madden's discovery of a severed blonde head in his marijuana hiding place in the Truro woods. MacDonald calls the



passage "a good example of Mailer guile and versatility—Tim Madden finding a head, done in the formal archaic structures of Poe."

**84.11** "Provincetown." *New York Times Book Review*, 29 July, 33. Accompanying Denis Donoghue's review is this brief excerpt from chapter 1 of *Tough Guys Don't Dance* (84.17), a description of the quality of light in Provincetown: "Perhaps this is why Provincetown is so beautiful. Conceived at night (for one would swear it was created in the course of one dark storm) its sand flats glistened in the dawn with the moist primeval innocence of land exposing itself to the sun for the first time. Decade after decade, artists came to paint the light of Provincetown."

**84.12** "Norman Mailer." Interview by Chuck Pfeifer. *Interview*, August, 58-60. Extended remarks on homosexuality, especially in *Ancient Evenings* (83.18) and *Tough Guys Don't Dance* (84.17), with briefer comment on the Italians of Brooklyn, Dotson Rader, Tennessee Williams, feminism, Russia, Marlon Brando, Jean-Paul Sartre, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and William Faulkner. Rpt: In part in *Sunday, Boston Herald Magazine*, 21 October, 3-6; cover photograph of Mailer.

**84.13** "Excerpt [from *Tough Guys Don't Dance*]." *Time*, 6 August, 66. Very brief excerpt from near the opening of chapter 3 of 84.17 dealing with the discovery of the severed head by Tim Madden. Accompanies negative review by Paul Grey.

**84.14** "Mailer: Tough Guy at Ease in P'town." Article-interview by Peter E. Howard. *Cape Cod Times*, 12 August, 1, 12-13; front page photograph of Mailer. The conversation focuses mainly on 84.17, with a long aside on feminism. Mailer says, "I always wanted to write a book about Provincetown...It's full of mood. I think the mark of a good murder mystery is that it is full of mood."

**84.15** "A 'Zen Koan' for a Title." *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, 12 August, 10. Accompanying Digby Diehl's review of 84.17 is the anecdote from chapter 5 on which the title is based.

**84.16** "A Country, Not a Scenario." *Parade*, 19 August, 4-9. Essay on Russia, based on Mailer's 15-day stay there in March.

**84.17** *Tough Guys Don't Dance*. New York: Random House, 20 August; London: Michael Joseph, 15 October. Novel, 229 pp., \$16.95. A signed, leather-bound edition appeared simultaneously carrying a one-page preface, "A Special Message for the First Edition by Norman Mailer," and accompanied by his poem about Provincetown, "The Harbors of the Moon," from *Deaths for the Ladies (and Other Disasters)* (62.3). Franklin Center, Pa.: Franklin Library. Dedication: "To Scott Meredith." The dust jacket photograph is by Mailer's Provincetown neighbor, Joel Meyerowitz. Rpt: Lengthy advance excerpts appeared in *Vanity Fair* (84.4, 84.7); brief ones in *USA Today* (84.10), *New York Times Book Review* (84.11), *Time* (84.13), and *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* (84.15); 98.7 (partial). See other 1984 en-

tries and, for comment on the film version of the novel, see 1986 and 1987 entries.

Mailer: "After she left, there was a week when the weather never shifted. One chill morose November sky went into another. The place turned gray before one's eyes. Back in summer, the population had been thirty thousand and doubled on weekends. It seemed as if every vehicle on Cape Cod chose to drive down the four-lane state highway that ended at our beach. Provincetown was as colorful then as St. Tropez, and as dirty by Sunday evening as Coney Island. In the fall, however, with everyone gone, the town revealed its other presence. Now the population did not boil up daily from thirty thousand to sixty, but settled down to its honest sediment, three thousand souls, and on empty weekday afternoons you might have said the true number of inhabitants must be thirty men and women, all hiding. There could be no other town like it. If you were sensitive to crowds, you might expire in summer from human propinquity. On the other hand, if you were unable to endure loneliness, the vessel of your person could fill with dread during the long winter" (87.17).

**84.18** "The Essential Mailer: Author Norman Mailer Talks about His New Novel, the Irish, and His Love for Chicago." Article-interview by Eugene Kennedy. *Sunday, Chicago Tribune Magazine*, 9 September, 23-25, 28-29. Perhaps Mailer's longest utterance on the Irish, given in the midst of a discussion of 84.17. Rpt: 88.6. See 68.26.

**84.19** "Inc.: Norman on Women." Column by Sneed and Lavin. *Chicago Tribune*, 9 September, Sec. 1, p. 2. Brief comments on the Women's Liberation movement, Geraldine Ferraro, and President Reagan: "I think he has a brain that's never been violated by an intellectual concept."

**84.20** "Crime and Puzzlement: The Real-Life Mystery Behind Norman Mailer's New Thriller." Article-interview by Andrea Chambers. *People Weekly*, 10 September, 42-45. Discussion of the attempt by federal officials to entrap Mailer in the drug-dealing of his friend Buzz Farbar by recording a luncheon conversation. Mailer was not involved and the attempt failed. Farbar was convicted, went to prison for eight years, and later committed suicide. What is especially reprehensible, Mailer says, "is when the government tries to get a man to entrap his friend."

**84.21** "Norman Mailer: Tough Writers Like Him Can Take a Little Heat When Moving in New Directions." Article-interview by Karen Heller. *USA Today*, 12 September, Sec. D, p. 1. Discussion of 84.17 with an aside on Truman Capote who died shortly before.

**84.22** "Norman Mailer: Doing a Number on the American Dream." Article-interview by Jerry Bauer. *Midweek* (London), 20 September, 4-6. Despite several errors, Bauer's piece has some good exchanges with Mailer, whom he interviewed in his Brooklyn home over dinner. On *Tough Guys Don't Dance* (84.17): "From the title, you can tell I didn't take myself too seriously. I hope the reader won't either. I want him to have fun with the book."

**84.23** "American Ego." Article-interview by Richard Rayner. *Time Out* (London), 27 September to 3 October, 14-16. Based on an interview conducted in Brooklyn at the same time as 84.24, Rayner's article parallels Howard's closely.

**84.24** "Thoughts of a Tough Guy." Article-interview by Richard Howard. *Mail On Sunday Magazine*, 14 October, 78. In this interview, conducted partly in Brooklyn and partly in London, where Mailer traveled for the 15 October publication of *Tough Guys Don't Dance* (84.17), Mailer explains how he came to write it: "I was truly in debt and I owed my publisher a great deal of money. And then the day of reckoning came and I realised I damn well had to write a book. It had been a book I had been trying to start all year and I hadn't been able to get near it. And it was as if suddenly my mind cleared. It was one of those joke situations where they give Popeye the can of spinach. It took 61 days." See 84.23.

**84.25** "Mixing It with Mailer." Article-interview by Martyn Harris. *New Society*, 18 October, 99-100. On the English promotional tour for 84.17, Mailer discusses theology with Harris.

**84.26** "Television: Fisticuffs." Column by Hugo Williams. *New Statesman*, 19 October, 39-40. Report on a 14 October London television program, "Face the Press." Mailer is sharply questioned by journalists Germaine Greer, Christopher Hitchens and Anthony Howard on what they take to be his obsession with homoeroticism.

**84.27** "Mailer and the Engines of Destruction." Article-interview by Terry Coleman. *Guardian*, 20 October. Rambling discussion at Brown's Hotel in London during Mailer's tour to promote 84.17. Politics—President Reagan, Geraldine Ferraro, Margaret Thatcher and Casper Weinberger—are discussed more than literature. Mailer says that Reagan "believes America's a magical place. And that everything will turn out all right. That's what they used to tell us in B-movies 50 years ago."

**84.28** Letter to the Editor. *Esquire*, November, 12. Letter of congratulation on the fiction in the August issue.

**84.29** "Norman Mailer: Face to Face." Interview by Dan Treisman and Robin Davis. *Isis: Oxford University Magazine*, November or December, 8-9. Unremarkable interview in which Mailer touches several subjects lightly, including 84.17, Ernest Hemingway, his theology, his image and Margaret Thatcher: "She's probably the best politician I've ever seen at work anywhere."

**84.30** "Norman Mailer: The Prisoner of Celebrity." Article-interview by Mark Bowden. *Philadelphia Inquirer Magazine*, 2 December, 40-44. Another report, presumably the last, based on the May dinner party thrown by Random House to promote 84.17, and a small news conference at Random House three months later when 84.17 had risen to the middle of most bestseller lists. The interview is valuable for Mailer's long



# Call of oceans, the film

statement about his unwillingness to plot his books out ahead of time: "Knowing what the plot of my book was going to be in detail would be like being married to someone whose every habit you knew." See 84.5, 84.6, 84.8.

**84.31** "Mailer and Caldwell Join Academy's Select 50." Article by Herbert Mitgang. *New York Times*, 8 December, 13. Report on the 7 December induction into the American Academy of Arts and Letters of two new members to fill the chairs of departed members. Mailer inherited chair 19, last held by Tennessee Williams and before that by Alexander Calder. Mailer: "Maybe some of his [Williams'] talent will rub off on me. I'd like to do a good play before I die—before I give up the seat." In a citation by the Academy, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. said: "In a career of living dangerously, he has shown qualities of passion, imagination, literary power and psychological subtlety that will surely make posterity regard him as one of the giants—if at times a wounded giant—of our age." See 98.4.

**84.32** "Huckleberry Finn, Alive at 100." *New York Times Book Review*, 9 December, 1, 36-37. Essay. Mailer's only extended comment on nineteenth-century American Literature, and one of his finest literary essays. Rpt: *Chicago Tribune Magazine*, 27 January 1985: 85.12, 98.7.

**84.33** "Fast Track: Vital Statistics, Norman Mailer." Interview by Cheryl Lavin. *Parade*, 16 December, 7. Mailer fills in the blanks to a set of standard questions—age, birthplace, favorite foods and movie, etc.

**84.34** "Norman Mailer: Fact and Fiction." Interview by Harvey Aronson. *PD: Sunday Magazine of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 16 December, 4-6, 22-23. Solid interview that deals not with how Mailer lives, but how he writes. Asked if he outlined *Tough Guys Don't Dance* (84.17) in his head, Mailer said: "More or less. The nearer I'd come to the approaching chapter, the more outline I'd get in my head. But I never try to tap my head, so to speak...I respect my unconscious. I walk around it."

**84.35** *The Last Night*. New York: Targ Editions. Story, 31 pp., \$100. No dedication. Limited edition of 250 copies. Rpt: From the December 1963 *Esquire* (63.39), with the incorrect notation that it appeared there in December 1962.

## 1987

**87.1** "Chatter." Column by Tim Allis. *People Weekly*, 5 January, 92. Allis quotes Mailer from the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* on the film he is poised to direct, "Tough Guys Don't Dance." The quotes, however, were made up;

the interview never took place, as Mailer explained in a letter to the editor, the published version of which has not been located. See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.2** "Tough Guys Make Movie." Article-interview by Dinitia Smith. *New York*, 12 January, 32-37. Report on the final days of shooting "Tough Guys Don't Dance" in Provincetown. Mailer, Ryan O'Neal, producer Tom Luddy and Lawrence Tierney are quoted. Provides a good explanation of the arrangement with Cannon Films which resulted in Mailer writing the screenplay (five drafts) and directing the film. Mailer also collaborated with Angelo Badalamenti on one of the songs in the film: "You'll Come Back (You Always Do)." See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.3** "Medium-Boiled Mailer." Article-interview by Gerald Peary. *Sight and Sound*, Spring, 104-07. Mailer speaks of his earlier films, the pleasures of filmmaking, with an aside on how Charles Laughton had to give up his plan to direct the movie version of *The Naked and the Dead* (48.2). Debra Sandlund and Lawrence Tierney are also quoted. See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.4** "Mailer Gives Film Another Fling with 'Guys.'" Article-interview by Todd McCarthy. *Variety*, 4 May, 2, 13, 14. Mailer discusses the various screenplays he has written: "King Lear" for Jean-Luc Godard, "Once Upon a Time in America" for Sergio Leone, one on mobster Meyer Lansky for producer Martin Starger at Universal, and Henry Miller's "Sexus" for Interscope and producers Joe Wizan and Marcia Nasatir. The possibility that Sidney Lumet might direct a screenplay of *The Deer Park* (55.4) by Joan Didion and John Gregory Dunne is also discussed in this useful piece. See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.5** "The Calm Comes to Cannes: But Not Entirely, as Norman Mailer Brings Out His 'Tough Guys.'" Article-interview by Rita Kempley. *Washington Post*, 18 May, Sec. C, pp. 1, 3. Mailer is quoted briefly on "Tough Guys Don't Dance" (which was screened outside the competition at Cannes because Mailer was a juror) in this potpourri on the festival. See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.6** "Mailer, Godard, Gish Bask in the Spotlight." Article-interview by Jay Carr. *Boston Globe*, 18 May, 24, 27. Another article on the Cannes Film Festival with Mailer again comparing directing and writing: "My idea of an ideal life at this time is to write a book, direct a movie, and so on." Mailer was a juror in the film competition. See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.7** "Mailer Hangs Tough Despite the Critics." Article-interview by Jeannie Williams. *USA Today*, 18 May, Sec. D, p. 7. Early, negative reviews

of the film version of *Tough Guys Don't Dance* (84.17) are cited in this piece about Mailer at Cannes. Mailer says, "I think my film lies somewhere in a no-man's land between a murder mystery, a suspense tale, a film of horror and a comedy of manners." See 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.8** "Pialat Film Gets Top Prize at Cannes." Article by Vincent Canby. *New York Times*, 20 May, Sec. C, p. 24. Canby praises "Tough Guys Don't Dance" in this overview of the Cannes Film Festival. Mailer is quoted briefly. See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.9** "Camera Angles: Reporters on the Set of 'Tough Guys.'" Article-interview by Bonnie Barber and Gregory Katz. *Provincetown Arts* 3 (summer), 18-20, 116-17; cover photograph of Mailer. Interleaved perspectives by Barber and Katz about the filming of "Tough Guys Don't Dance" in Provincetown. One of the best of the on-the-set pieces, with long quotes from Mailer and Ryan O'Neal, who compares Mailer's directorial style to Stanley Kubrick's. See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.10** Comment on James Jones. In "Glimpses: James Jones, 1921-1977." By J. Michael Lennon and George Plimpton. *Paris Review*, no. 103 (summer), 205-36. This portrait of Mailer's friend, comprised of excerpts from Lennon's interviews with Jones's family and friends, including four with Mailer, are taken from those done for "James Jones: From Reveille to Taps," a 60-minute television documentary produced by Lennon and Jeffrey Van Davis for Sangamon State University (now University of Illinois, Springfield). It appeared on PBS in 1985 and 1986.

**87.11** "Mailer's Minuet: 'Tough Guys' Two Left Feet." Article-interview by Karen Jaehne. *Film Comment* 23 (July-August), 11-17. Mailer says more on filmmaking, and says it well, in this interview than in any other, and dissipates, to some extent, Jaehne's initial skepticism about his abilities. He also discusses his resistance to "categories" which are "just critics' attempt to bring order to a complex aesthetic universe." "Forms," he says should "be explored, not obeyed." Tom Luddy, Wings Hauser, and Frances Fisher are also quoted. See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.12** "Proud Father: Mailer Pleased with 'Tough Guys.'" Article-interview by Tim Miller. *Cape Cod Times*, 14 August, 35, 38. Notable mainly for revealing that "Tough Guys Don't Dance" will arrive at movie theaters on 18 September (New York premier, 16 September). See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.13** "Norman Mailer Directs 'Tough Guys' on Film." Interview by unidentified interviewer. *Brooklyn Heights Press and Cobble Hill News*, 10 September, 1, 16. Mailer speaks again of how his film cuts across categories, his previous films, the acting of Ryan O'Neal; he also compares literature and film. A cast list is given. Rpt: *L.A. Alive*, 18 September, 25, and in a Cannon Films publication booklet, which also contains a full



crew list and biographies of the leading actors, the director, and producers. See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.14** "Film-Goers' Parties Bring Out the Strangest Mix." Article by Deirdre Kelly. *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 14 September, Sec. C, p. 12. In Canada for a film festival, Mailer is quoted briefly on Ryan O'Neal and the similarities between "Tough Guys Don't Dance" and David Lynch's "Blue Velvet." Accompanied by 87.15. See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.15** "Mailer Flees from Decades of Yuppiedom." Article-interview by Rick Groen. *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 14 September, Sec. C, p. 12. After a press conference at Toronto's Festival of Festivals, where "Tough Guys Don't Dance" was shown, Mailer spoke to Groen about the '80s, yuppies, the coming end of communism in Russia, and called Oliver North "a young Ronald Reagan, who can press every sentimental button and sit on every pious pot." Accompanied by 87.14. See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.16** "Tough Guys Keep Writing." Article-interview by Jay Carr. *Boston Globe*, 17 September, 85, 88. In an expansive mood, Mailer talks about his first visit to Provincetown in the early '40s, Jean-Luc Godard, actors, screenplays, Raymond Chandler, machismo, feminism, and the darkness in *Tough Guys Don't Dance* (84.17). Accompanied by Carr's positive review. See 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.17** "Dance of a Tough Guy." Article-interview by Michael Ventura. *L.A. Weekly*, 18-24 September, 14-21; cover photograph of Mailer. Ventura combines a fine interview in California with his remembrance of Mailer lecturing at University of California, Berkeley in 1972, some well-chosen quotes from Mailer's books, and his final reflections on how Mailer "is going down slow, like the old blues [song] says, but he is going down smart." Mailer's elaboration of the distinction between "soul" and "psyche" is only one of several thoughtful exchanges with Ventura. Rpt: 88.6. See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.18** "Mailer and the Movies: Tough Guy Gives Film Another Shot." Article-interview by Peter Rainer. *Weekend Magazine, Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, 18 September, 6-7; cover photograph of Mailer. Interviewed in his attic study in Provincetown, Mailer talks about "Tough Guys Don't Dance," which opened nationwide on 18 September, and his year (1949-50) in Hollywood: "I had a hard time getting out of Los Angeles, even with nothing happening. I hated to leave with a failure and so I kept staying and staying and getting into more and more conversations about making a movie myself. And finally I gave up and said to myself, 'Get Out.'" Accompanied

by a largely negative review by Deborah J. Kunk, and a full-page ad for the film. See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.19** "A New Direction: Norman Mailer Makes His First Mainstream Film." Article-interview by Marshall Fine. *Gannet Westchester Newspapers*, 18 September, Sec. B, pp. 1, 12. Mailer again discusses "Tough Guys Don't Dance": how it straddles categories, his future in filmmaking, and his early films. See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.20** "Mailer, 64, Stays Tough." Article-interview by James Verniere. *Boston Sunday Herald*, 20 September, Sec. 3, pp. 1-2. Humdrum piece based on an interview with Mailer in Toronto where "Tough Guys Don't Dance" was screened as part of that city's Festival of Festivals. See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.21** "Norman Mailer the Director Hangs Tough." Article-interview by Edward Guthmann. *Datebook, San Francisco Chronicle*, 20 September, 19-20; cover photograph of Mailer. Another piece based on Mailer's Toronto visit. Mailer again discusses "Blue Velvet," the uncertain category of his film, Ryan O'Neal, and audience response to the film. See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.22** "Norman Mailer 'Tough' Enough?" Article-interview by Bob Lardine. *Close-Up* (New York), *Daily News*, 20 September, 1-2; cover photograph of Mailer. Most of Mailer's comments are given over to his relations with the cast of "Tough Guys Don't Dance," but he also lists the four stages of knowing a woman: "(1) living with her, (2) marrying her, (3) having children with her, and (4) divorcing her. You really know nothing about a woman until you meet her in court." See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.23** "A Mellow Mailer Has a Mystery Movie." Article-interview by Luaine Lee. *Chicago Tribune*, 21 September, Sec. 2 ("Tempo"), p. 3. Mailer talks more about the problems of celebrity than "Tough Guys Don't Dance" in this brief piece. See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.24** "Semi-'Tough' Mailer." Article-interview by Stephen M. Silverman. *New York Post*, 21 September, 31. Mailer credits John Bailey, his cinematographer for "Tough Guys Don't Dance," with improving "the director's vision." He also contrasts cinematic and novelistic pace, and discusses "Blue Velvet" in his conversation with Silverman at Toronto's Festival of Festivals. See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.25** "Norman Mailer's 'Extreme' Situations." Article-interview. Information provided by Luaine Lee of Knight-Ridder newspapers; by Candice Burk-Block, in a dispatch of the New

York Times Syndication Sales Corp.; and by Barbara Bright of Reuter News Service. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 30 September, 1, 4. Expansion of material in 87.23, including Mailer's comments on good and evil: "My idea of an awful person is one who is 35 percent good and 65 percent evil. A hero is perhaps a reverse percentage. I'm fascinated by the good that is in evil people." See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.26** "His Brilliant (New) Career?" Article-interview by Daphne Merkin. Photographs by Adam Bartos. *American Film*, October, 42-49. In this insider piece, which captures the mood of the shoot better than any other, Merkin gets comments on the set of "Tough Guys Don't Dance," not only from Mailer, but from set designer Armin Ganz, the mixer, Drew Kunin, the makeup artist, Don, the costume designer, Michael Kaplan, and actors Lawrence Tierney, Ryan O'Neal, Debra Sandlund and Frances Fisher. She also reveals that the film used six interior sets, 59 locales, and had a crew of 97. See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.27** "Words and Pictures: A Conversation with Norman Mailer about Directing the Movie of His Own Novel, *Tough Guys Don't Dance* [87.17]." Article by unidentified writer. *Vanity Fair*, October, 68, 72, 76. Mailer reveals here that Warren Beatty was his first choice to play Tim Madden in his film. He also speaks at length on the director's relationship to his crew, comparing making a film with being in the army. See 1986 and 1987 entries.

**87.28** "No Longer Such a Tough Guy, Norman Mailer Frets Over His Shaky Career as a Filmmaker." Article-interview by Alan Richman. *People Weekly*, 5 October, 40-42. Mailer says little new about his film in this piece, but he does discuss the writing life: "I'm not morbid, but anything I do could be the last thing. I've become more serious naturally. It's a biological process." The first weekend gross for "Tough Guys Don't Dance" is reported: "a disappointing \$421,390." The film went on to make a profit. See 84.17, 1986 and 1987 entries.

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*Great for Brian*





## Forum 49: Relating All the Arts

by Jennifer Liese

*the* grounds were parched during Provincetown's summer of '49—the *Advocate* reported, "This summer severe drought has burned up lawns and gardens and lowered the normal levels of all of Provincetown's ponds."—yet appetites for the arts were whet as Weldon Kees, Fritz Bultman, and Cecil Hemley initiated Forum 49, a series of 10 weekly symposia on topics ranging from the definition of an artist to the depravity of Soviet policy to French avant-garde film. The exchanges took place in Gallery 200 (at 200 Commercial Street, corner of Carver), a former Ford garage white-washed and decked out with pews purchased for nine dollars a piece from the Central Methodist Church. Audiences, surrounded by the first New England exhibition entirely devoted to abstraction, saw paintings by about 50 artists, many future icons of the percolating Abstract Expressionist movement—Robert Motherwell, Mark Rothko, Richard Pousette-Dart, Peter Busa, Adolph Gottlieb, and Hans Hofmann among them. Jackson Pollock's *Number Seventeen*, illustrated in a summer *Life* magazine spread that famously asked, "Is He the Greatest Living American Painter?" was here, too. With the merits of abstract painting still much in dispute, viewers of the new art were predictably opinionated. Accompanying Pollock's work was a ballot box into which visitors stuffed votes in response to *Life's* query. The outcome? After one week: 503 no's to 39 yes's.

On the inaugural evening, July 3, painters Hofmann, Gottlieb, and George Biddle, along with architect Serge Chermayeff, posited divergent conjectures in response to the question, "What is an artist?" Artists are like everyone else, Biddle, the conservative voice in the group, declared—"intelligent or bohemian, republican or communist." Chermayeff argued for good craftsmanship while Gottlieb and Hofmann made pleas for originality. It is fitting that on this eve of Independence Day, heated follow-up discussion concerned the American artist's relation to the nation's public and to the world at large. With the whole country's citizenry reeling in the wake of World War II and shoring up against the first loomings of the Cold War, the mid-century artist was urged to fix a position of patriotism that unequivocally, if subtly, advocated for democratic ideals. Could splatters, drips, and hieroglyphs be symbols of freedom?

The first symposium attracted a capacity crowd of 200, each paying 60 cents a ticket, while an estimated 500 were turned away. Held every Thursday thereafter, the subsequent nine evenings proved as popular. Their extraordinary range provides a sketch of many of the major

cultural and political preoccupations of mid-century:

- "The Dream World of the Soviet Bureaucracy" (Dwight Macdonald, editor of *Politics* magazine, "on a new theory exposing the lies of the Russian dictatorship.")
- "American Jazz Music: The 1920s" (Kees played records by Jelly Roll Morton, Bessie Smith, Louis Armstrong, Kid Ory, and others, asserting that jazz was buried under "debased commercial popular music.")
- "An Evening of Films" (Joseph Cornell's collection of little-seen films and the first screening of Helen Levitt and Janice Loeb's raw footage for *104th Street*.)
- "America's Responsibilities in the New World" (Address by Francis Biddle, U.S. Attorney General during World War II and judge for the Nuremberg trials.)
- "James Joyce & T.S. Eliot" (Recordings of each reading from their own work, with commentary by Joyce scholar Nathan Halper and poet, critic, and novelist Howard Nemerov.)
- "French Art vs. U.S. Today" (Artists Motherwell and Karl Knaths and several critics including Stuart Preston of the *New York Times* held forth; Gottlieb moderated.)
- "Directions in 20th-Century Architecture" (Propositions by architects Marcel Breuer and Gyorgy Kepes and Museum of Modern Art curator of architecture and design Peter Blake.)
- "Finding Yourself through Psychoanalysis" (A round-table discussion between five psychoanalysts, most summering on the Lower Cape.)
- "Everybody's Forum" ("End-of-season retrospect"—13 speakers on various subjects; conversation eventually revolved around granting or denying freedom to Communists in the U.S.)

Seeking the vision behind Forum 49, all signs lead to Weldon Kees (see Irving Sandler's profile, following pages). He was, as Jeanne Bultman, wife of Fritz, describes him, "a live wire who got everyone going" in a town still "very dull" with the residue of wartime. Norman Mailer remembers Kees as "agreeably open and unafraid, like people from California often are, and unlike so many of us from New York and New England, who are convinced we know better." Kees was in fact from Beatrice, Nebraska, and perhaps it was in part his west-of-eastcoast fearlessness (along with undeniable erudition) that gained him, upon arrival in New York in the early '40s, immediate entrance into the literary, political, and art scenes. Many of the speakers and artists in Forum 49 came through his connections. Others were sought out during trips through the Wellfleet woods in Kees' newly acquired car, purchased from Rothko for \$175.

Spirit, aplomb, a coveted car—these possessions pale in comparison to the one that most contributed to Kees cultivating such a broad-minded program—his own multifarious talents. Painter, poet, art critic, jazz musician, playwright, and filmmaker, Kees was a near-caricature of a Renaissance man. At a time that called for "pure" painting (reigning critic Clement Greenberg's





WELDON KEES WITH JAZZ FORUM POSTER BY FRITZ BULTMAN  
PHOTO © BILL WITT

espousal of "flatness" and contempt for any narrative content held enormous sway) and, by extension, "pure" painters, Kees took a definite risk of being labeled a dilettante, or worse, an "intellectual." Unlike Motherwell, who aggressively downplayed his writing in favor of his painting ("I have written hundreds of thousands of words during my life, though I loathe the act of writing, its lack of physicality and sensuality," he once said.), Kees embraced the various realms in himself, and advocated for their commingling in the world, writing in 1955 that he founded Forum 49 "in an effort to relate all the arts."

In conceiving the Forum, Kees most likely looked to various precedents. During the middle to late '40s, Harold Rosenberg and Motherwell edited *possibilities*, a journal that billed itself as "an open forum for 20th-century artists, scholars, and writers, the word 'art' being taken in the broadest sense." The late '40s saw precursors to "What Is an Artist?" such as the Museum of Modern Art's "The Modern Artist Speaks" and the Art Students League's "The Schism between the Artist and Public." "Subjects of the Artist," an important series of lectures, was held in New York in 1948-49. And in October of 1948, *Life* presented the results of a "Roundtable on Modern Art," at which 15 experts pondered the oddly posed question, "Is modern art, considered as a whole, a good or bad development? That is to say, is it something that responsible people can support, or may they neglect it as a minor and impermanent phase of culture?"

However, none of these programs, all of which took on visual art proper, possessed the quality that made Forum 49 unique for its time, a quality we call in our time, interdisciplinarity. By uniting art with broader culture, Forum 49 risked, and found, a good amount of controversy. In a period of intense aesthetic, personal, and political conflict, the artists themselves struggled with the proceedings, as Bultman's sketchbook from that summer reveals: "B. and C. [Breuer and Chermayeff] bring back in full flood the sterility of the Bauhaus and that deadly attitude of clean control." And, far more troubled, he wrote: "This stupid Forum on French Art vs. U.S. Art Today has me down. The middle-class opportunistic attitude of Gottlieb is truly repelling. If we are in a strong position let us be generous (being strong is also questionable)." Audiences, too, were fraught. Before Macdonald's address, Kees wrote to him, "We have run into a certain amount of hysteria of a sort we hadn't counted on. Somebody got a look at our program, saw

the word 'soviet' in the title of your talk, and the next thing we knew the rumor was all over town that 'the Commies have taken over the building at 200 Commercial.'"

Provincetown, the nation's oldest surviving artists colony, has witnessed several surges of vitality over its 100-year history. Forum 49 was among the strongest, and its significance reached far beyond our Cape. Forum 49 received enthusiastic attention not only from the local press, which covered every event, but from the *New York Times* and the *Christian Science Monitor*. Greenberg offered a hearty plug limited only by requisite geocentrism, calling the Forum "the most exciting thing in art ever to be run outside New York in the summer—or in the winter, too." Yet today, Forum 49 is largely neglected in art-historical writings. It preceded, by just a few months, the founding in December of the Club, the Eighth Street meeting place attended by many of the same artists, "wintering" in New York City. While the Club is consistently championed as the nest where the fledgling Abstract Expressionists stretched their wings, Forum 49 is at best portrayed as a stray twig. What brief references one does find describe a grassroots endeavor—quaint but by no means serious or formative—and seldom fail to mention the charming detail that speakers were paid with nothing more than bottles of whiskey.

Why has Forum 49 been largely overlooked? Perhaps because Kees, the major force behind the events, mysteriously disappeared just six years later, writing himself and Forum 49 out of the public consciousness and consequently the history books. Perhaps the range of art forms addressed and unsuppressed politicism clashed with ideals of purity of genre. Perhaps, happening as it did on the remote fringe of the Cape, Forum 49 was just too far off the map. Or maybe it was the ephemerality of the episode.

Later in the pages of this magazine, Mira Schor asks, with some skepticism, "Could the current art community generate something like Forum 49, where the newest stylistic movements and theoretical issues in contemporary art and culture would be examined by an enthusiastic and informed crowd?" Let's not pretend. It's true, as Schor points out, that many artists from urban art centers are kept away by sky-high rents, diminishing our cross-flow of ideas. And that some artists who do manage to live and work here seem content in their "regionalism." And that many visitors appear more interested in beaches and shopping sprees than in art and culture.

But let's try another question. Could *any* art community generate a Forum 49 today? In 1949, the avant-garde art world was made up of a few hundred artists sharing many common concerns. Today, hundreds of thousands of artists work in dozens of styles based in as many theories. The "art world" more resembles many satellites circling and spinning off from the massive, yet unraveling, historical core of modernism. In other

words, it may be impossible to even begin a dialogue that "relates all the arts" and culture in any comprehensive way. But in Provincetown, we do have other, intriguing possibilities.

Theorists speak of a "globalized" art world in describing the current situation, wherein a stable of international art-stars floats from one biennial in Sydney to another in Brazil to yet another in Johannesburg. "Site-specific" art proliferates, but site-specific artists seem a dying breed. What we have in Provincetown may be termed a "localized" art world—a community of deeply rooted artists and writers committed to, and nourished by, place. Today I sat on a bench in front of Town Hall and listened to a friend, a painter and musician, perform with his friend, a musician and fisherman, while a glazy-eyed man in a glittery disco shirt and straw hat danced around them. This is one of our many unique realities, a relating of the arts of which we can speak with knowledge and truth. And in an increasingly homogenized art world, to speak of *this* reality may be a most radical act.

In Provincetown we are both blessed and cursed by marginality. The upside: out of the spotlight, there is room to experiment, to take risks, even to fail, which is not always a bad thing. The downside: out of the spotlight, it's tough to see and to be seen. On this, the art colony's 100th anniversary, we face a collective existential question: Do we want to see ourselves?

When asked why there was no encore to Forum 49, Jeanne Bultman says the intention was never really to sustain the effort, rather, that summer, "the time was right and it all just stuck." The time was right because artists faced a crisis. Motherwell, in his statement at the forum called "French Art vs. U.S. Art Today," put it straight, "The conditions under which an artist exists in America are nearly unbearable." Today artists here (and everywhere) face some similar challenges—poverty, a hostile or indifferent public, and some new ones—funding cuts, commercialization. The founders of Forum 49 addressed these conditions not by bemoaning them, but by banding together to enact a generative expression of what mattered most.

One clue invites speculation that Forum 49 was meant to be more than a one-time affair. At upper right, the Forum 49 letterhead reads just "FORUM" and beneath that, "Provincetown, Massachusetts." The typesetting allows just enough space for Kees, in each of his correspondences, to have crayoned in "49." Fifty years later, it seems time to fill in that blank again.

## FORUM 49

PROVINCETOWN, MASSACHUSETTS

*Jennifer Liese is writing a graduate thesis on Forum 49. This summer, she is coordinating "Forum 99," eight symposia on music, film, writing, art, politics and more, to be held at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum in July and August.*



# The Irascible Weldon Kees

by Irving Sandler

Now, some four decades after his disappearance, Weldon Kees is remembered as a poet but not as a painter. His active role in the New York art world of the late 1940s—the subject of this essay—has also been forgotten. Kees was a latecomer to the milieu of avant-garde painting, having been introduced to it around 1943 by Manny Farber, the art critic for *The New Republic*, who was a friend, and Harold Rosenberg, his upstairs neighbor, and, like Kees, a poet (later to become a well-known art critic). By 1946, Kees had already been accepted enough in the art world to be asked by a leading dealer, Samuel Kootz, to write the introduction to an exhibition of Byron Browne's paintings. Kootz then invited Kees, along with Rosenberg and Clement Greenberg, among others, to participate in a portfolio on the theme of *Women* which coupled works by writers and artists; Kees wrote a poem to accompany a painting by Robert Motherwell.

Kees was also a latecomer as a visual artist, beginning to paint only in 1944, while in his early 30s. But he received recognition relatively soon, having his first one-person show at the end of 1948 at the Peridot Gallery, one of the few galleries that represented Abstract Expressionists. (He would have three more shows at the Peridot.) At this time, he also began to write art criticism, in 1949 replacing Greenberg at *The Nation*.

The world of the emerging Abstract Expressionists was the natural place for Kees. Not only did he appreciate their painting but he befriended the artists, particularly Hans Hofmann, William Baziot, Fritz Bultman, and Byron Browne, reviewing their shows. Above all, he admired Hofmann and, at his request, wrote a poem for his Paris show. It included the lines: "Because of you./The light burns sharper in how many rooms./Shaped to a new identity." As a teacher, Hofmann was intent on promulgating his aesthetic principles, and in 1950 Kees was happy to help him shape his Germanic-English prose into something comprehensible.

Kees' thinking about art was related to that of his new colleagues. In 1948, he told a reviewer that his process of painting was "to start with nothing at all...and see what happens. Often I'm surprised...and continue to be surprised at what's happening." In 1950, he added that his work "communicates plastically, sensually, and psychologically through the inherent quality of paint."

In an article in *The Nation* on January 7, 1950, Kees wrote about how difficult it was for an avant-garde painter to survive in America, an

article that clearly revealed his sympathy for his fellow artists. He proclaimed them "a new school of abstractionists, whose originality and seriousness exist in their own terms—and in truly *international* terms—rather than as a minor branch of the School of Paris." However, "From an economic standpoint the activities of our advanced painters must be regarded as either heroic, mad, or compulsive; they have only an aesthetic justification...One is continually astounded that art persists at all in the face of so much indifference, failure, and isolation." Kees then noted that van Gogh could write: "'Now it is getting grimmer, colder, emptier, and duller around me,' while insisting that 'surely there will come a change for the better.'" Van Gogh had hope, but Kees suggested that it was the fate of advanced American artists to have none. Shortly before Kees wrote this article, an essay by Antonin Artaud titled "Van Gogh, The Man Suicided by Society," appeared in the March 1949 issue of *Tiger's Eye*, a magazine that featured the painting and statements of the Abstract Expressionists. The publication of the Artaud essay indicates that van Gogh's art and life were very much on the minds of avant-garde artists at the time.

Having established himself as a painter, Kees became increasingly active in the Abstract Expressionist art world. While in Provincetown during July and August of 1949, he was instrumental in organizing a series of Thursday evening panel discussions titled "Forum 49." The following April, Kees was invited to participate in a three-day closed conference of avant-garde artists at Studio 35 in New York. On the final day, Adolph Gottlieb suggested sending a public letter to Roland L. Redmond, the president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, to protest its national juried exhibition titled *American Painting Today—1950*. Drafted by Gottlieb in consultation with Barnett Newman, Motherwell, and Ad Reinhardt, the letter denounced the conservatism of the five regional juries, the national jury, and the jury of awards. The "choice of jurors...does not warrant any hope that a just proportion of advanced art will be included." Consequently, the signatories would boycott this "monster" show. The letter was signed by 18 painters, including Kees, and supported by 10 sculptors.

Newman hand-delivered the letter to the *New York Times* on Sunday, May 21. The artists were well enough known for the *Times* to run a front-page story on the following day under the heading: "18 Painters Boycott Metropolitan: Charge 'Hostility to Advanced Art.'" On May 23, the *New York Herald Tribune* published an editorial titled "The Irascible Eighteen" (giving the artists

a label that stuck), which condemned the protesters and defended the Metropolitan Museum. A letter to the museum's director, Francis Henry Taylor, signed by 76 artists, among them Kees' friend Byron Browne, also expressed confidence in the integrity of the jurors, but this letter made hardly any news. *Art Digest* scolded the dissenting artists for convicting the Museum before trial and spoke up for the fairness of the jurors. Joining in the controversy, *Art News* endorsed the Irascibles' assessment of the Metropolitan's juries but nonetheless urged the artists to enter the competition.

Kees continued the attack on the Metropolitan in *The Nation* of June 3. He condemned the museum for having spent so little of its available funds to buy the works of living American artists and added that those it did acquire "might as well have been chosen by a committee of Congressmen or the ladies of the Elkhart Bide-a-Wee." He also denounced Taylor as a philistine who "makes no secret of his hostility to advanced trends in contemporary art," and the jurors as "almost a solid phalanx of...academics [that] suggests...entrenched timidity and conservatism." Aware of arguments that "this jury 'may surprise us' by picking an adventurous and valuable show," Kees wrote: "I look forward to this with the same warm expectations that I have...of Baudelaire being voted the favorite poet of the Cicero, Illinois, junior high schools." Kees concluded that "avant-garde painters in this country have taken a united position against the Academy; this is their historical role; the Academy itself drew the lines."

Two days after the Kees article appeared, *Time* reported on the controversy in the lead article of its art pages, the story accompanied by reproductions of paintings by Baziot, Reinhardt, and Hofmann. Then *Life* decided to cover the protest, planning to publish a picture story after the winners of the Metropolitan competition were announced, and asked the dissident painters to pose for a photograph. Taken on November 24, it was published on January 15, 1951, in an article titled "The Metropolitan and Modern Art." This group portrait has been reproduced so often and disseminated so widely that it has become *the* image whereby we envision the artists who achieved the triumph of American painting. Kees, however, was missing from the photograph, having left New York for California before it was taken.

Why did the Irascible letter generate the interest that it did? For one, it came on the heels of a widely publicized policy statement issued by New York's Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and Boston's



Institute of Contemporary Art, which proclaimed "the continuing validity...of modern art," that is "art which is esthetically an innovation," and which promised that in the future the three museums would treat advanced art fairly. Thus a significant part of the art establishment had begun to make friendly overtures to the American avant-garde. Indeed, in retrospect it appears that in 1950 it suddenly became intellectually disreputable to dismiss avant-garde art out of hand or ridicule it as a lunatic or infantile aberration.

At the same time too, the emerging Abstract Expressionists were developing a new collective consciousness. It is difficult to specify what the basis of that was, since the artists never issued a manifesto and strongly resisted the notion that they were a group. At the Studio 35 conference, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., the founding director of the Museum of Modern Art, the only non-artist par-

Studio 35 sessions and the subsequent protest. More than that, they believed that their art was different from and better than that of other living artists, including colleagues in the avant-garde whom they left out. In retrospect, it appears that the 18 painters had established, if not a group, then a kind of group consensus about the superiority of their own painting. And it was perceived that way, although they stated in their letter to the Metropolitan: "We believe that all advanced artists of America will join us in our stand." One excluded artist wrote Gottlieb that he "was made very unhappy by not being invited to join this group—aren't I good enough for them."

The protest of the Irascibles indicated that they felt confident enough as a group to enter into the public arena to do battle against their art-world enemies. Using military terms, Stuart Preston, the art critic of the *New York Times*, pre-

dicted a confrontation between advanced and conservative artists. On September 17, he wrote: "One sure thing about the new art season is that the nonfigurative forces will be stronger. They have regrouped; their commanders are older and more seasoned." Among the artists Preston singled out were Gottlieb and Hofmann. Certainly, the Irascibles had already become well known enough for their letter to be newsworthy. It was covered in the mass media as well as the art media, meriting an article on the front page of the *Times*, an editorial in the *Tribune*, and stories in *Time* and *Life*. Even the *Daily News*, as kitsch as a tabloid could get, ran a three-and-one-half inch item on May 22. Indeed, the Irascibles so commanded the attention of the media that most reports and reviews of the Metropolitan show at the time noted their absence and recapitulated the reasons for it.

Motherwell and Reinhardt commented on the new status of the avant-garde in *Modern Artists in America*, which they edited in 1951 (and in which they reproduced a painting by Kees): "From East to West numerous galleries and museums, colleges and art schools, private and regional demonstrations display their mounting interest in original plastic efforts." Proof of this were shows organized by the Museum of Modern Art: *Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America* (1951), which included 12 Irascibles, and *Fifteen Americans* (1952), which included five, putting MoMA's stamp of approval on first-generation Abstract Expressionism.

At the beginning of 1950, Kees had implied that the situation of the Abstract Expressionists



WELDON KEES, *THE STUDIO*, 1948. COLLECTION: GERTRUDE STEIN

ticipant (and it was significant that this art-world power was invited and attended), suggested that the artists should decide on "the most acceptable name" for themselves before others did. Barr went on to say that their work had been labeled "abstract-expressionist, abstract-symbolist, intra-subjectivist, etc." Willem de Kooning countered: "It is disastrous to name ourselves," and he spoke for the assembled painters as a whole. Jackson Pollock was particularly concerned lest the Irascibles be viewed as a group, and he agreed to sign the letter only if it was clear that they were not.

Indeed, the Irascibles did not share an aesthetic or a style. However, they did imply recognition of the worth of each other's work by their self-selection for participation both in the

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was hopeless. But by the summer—considering the three-museum statement and the coverage of the Irascibles in the art and mass media—he must have sensed that there was hope for painting. But not for Kees himself, or so it seemed to him. Responsible for his pessimism in large measure was the fact that his life had taken a wretched turn. The winter of 1949-1950 had been exceedingly difficult. He recalled in a later letter to a friend: "New York got to be too much of a struggle, at least for me, and one that availed close to naught. Mostly got tired of the dirt and the darkness...Some of it had to do with the fact that we were living, if you can call it that...in a loft on the lower East Side, poor as hell, with a kerosene stove that only heated about a thirtieth of the room. We damn near froze."

Ill and depressed much of the time, Kees found it difficult to paint or to write. Moreover, as he wrote: "I find myself becoming more & more anti-social: it is an ordeal to get myself out of the house and there are fewer & fewer people I care about seeing." Indeed, as his life worsened, Kees grew increasingly cool toward his colleagues. This was indicated by his passive role in the Studio 35 conference. The minutes, cut down though they were, record that he had spoken only twice, two sentences the first day and one the third, and the latter had a barbed edge. Given his talkative nature and his active participation in Forum 49 the previous summer, his relative silence can be interpreted as alienation and disaffection in the company of the New York avant-garde.

After summering in Provincetown, Kees moved to California, where the weather was more pleasant and the pace of living calmer than in New York. Settling in San Francisco, he found another community, one made up of artists who were teachers and former students at the California School of Fine Arts. He was quickly accepted into the San Francisco art world; in 1951, he was given a show at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor. The liveliness of his new colleagues pleased him, and he thought that San Francisco could well become a major art center. But New York was still on his mind, and he viewed it with growing distaste. When he saw the photograph of 15 of the Irascibles in *Life*, he commented that they all "look as though someone had just tossed some pigpiss in their peanut butter." In 1955, his friend, the movie critic Pauline Kael, recalled that Kees "never spoke of New York except with hatred and contempt." His hostility may have had deep roots in his psyche. Bultman suggested that it issued from a tension "between his own dedication and his disgust for a world 'gone rotten.'"

Kees' biographer, James Reidel, calls Kees "a forgotten Irascible," and so he was. But he was not the only one. Jimmy Ernst, Fritz Bultman, and Hedda Sterne (the only woman in the *Life* picture) have been almost as neglected as Kees, although they continued to be on the New York art scene. One can only speculate about the reasons for Kees' eclipse. Perhaps the most important was his leaving New York in 1950, at the moment a number of Abstract Expressionists



began to achieve recognition outside their own small circle. Had Kees been in New York he probably would have posed with the Irascibles for the *Life* photograph and, as Reidel remarks, "art historians would *have* to give him critical attention to explain the presence of this poet." After he left, Kees had two more shows at the Peridot Gallery—his last was in 1952—but that was not enough to keep his painting in the art world's eye.

Kees' relationship with most of his colleagues was probably uneasy from the first. His lateness in becoming an artist would have been held against him, as it was against Newman. Kees' stature as a poet and art critic as well would have hurt his standing as a painter, particularly because he repeatedly condemned "specialization," that is, the confinement of contemporary artists to one art, claiming that it had curbed their creativity, and more than that, had caused "the culture [to become] very sick." At a time when existentialist rhetoric was in vogue, the idea of the painter's singleminded "commitment" to painting was deemed critical by the Abstract Expressionists. Motherwell and Newman were also denigrated by their fellow artists because they wrote or had written extensively on art.

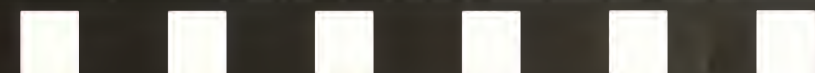
Word of Kees' disaffection with his friends and their art must have gotten back to New York. That would have bothered the Abstract Expressionists, and would have lessened their efforts on his behalf. For example, Kees was not among the 61 artists in the 9th St. show in 1951, an important exhibition they themselves organized. Although the Abstract Expressionists may have been somewhat more optimistic than before about the situation of avant-garde art, they continued to feel embattled well into the 1950s. They were very sensitive to criticism; they believed as Robert Goldwater wrote as late as 1959: "Either you're with us or against us...We've got enough enemies and let's not give anything away." Kees's early death at age 41 surely held back his recognition. So did the subsequent scattering of his works, which discouraged museums from assembling them for surveys. More than any other art world mechanism, museum exhibitions focus art world attention on what is shown and encourage commentary about it. To sum up, there appear to have been reasons for the neglect of Kees' painting that have nothing to do with their quality. Now, some four decades after his disappearance, it seems time to take a fresh look.

*Irving Sandler is an art critic-historian who has written a history of art since 1945 in four volumes, among which are The Triumph of American Painting: A History of Abstract Expressionism (1970) and The Art of the Postmodern Era: From the Late 1960s to the Early 1990s (1996). He has also written monographs on Alex Katz, Al Held, and Mark di Suvero.*

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# Edwin Dickinson: The Site Taken as Seen

by Mary E. Abell

Edwin Dickinson first came to Provincetown to study with Charles Hawthorne in the early days of this century, when the life of the town was still tied to the sea and 19th-century traditions. He lived in town yearround, with a few interruptions, from 1913-1939, then moved to Wellfleet. In 1958 Dickinson told an interviewer that he felt he could "better myself a good deal" living in the town. His daughter, Helen Dickinson Baldwin, says that the area was always "his spiritual home."

In the development of his own aesthetic, Dickinson drew on the artistic lineage he inherited from his primary teachers, William Merritt Chase and Hawthorne (who had also studied with Chase). But what is exciting and moving about Dickinson's work is the extent to which he transformed his influences into a highly personal, visionary world in which feeling and form are intimately linked.

Both in the classroom and out, the artist was loath to discuss his work beyond formal or literal concerns. He was an engaging teacher who taught at the Provincetown Art Association and for two decades in New York at the Cooper Union, the Art Students League, and the Brooklyn Museum School among others. (Beginning in 1944 the artist began wintering in New York.) The methods he taught provide rich insights into Dickinson's aesthetic philosophy.



EDWIN DICKINSON, *SOUTH WELFLEET INN*, 1954  
COLLECTION MR. AND MRS. EDWARD L. SHEIN

Dickinson's approach, inherited from Hawthorne, involved training the eye to experience the visual directly. A favorite Dickinson phrase—"the site taken as seen"—meant that students should paint or draw what they actually saw, versus what they thought they saw. "The site taken as seen" did not, however, mean that the artist was simply recording a more normative vision, such as that captured by a photograph. Dickinson's daughter once attempted to photograph a teapot that appears in *The Cello Player* (1924-26). She was astonished to find that she was unable to locate the same perspective as appears in the painting. Denver Lindley, an



FRONT ROW, L TO R: RAYMOND EASTWOOD, CHARLES W. HAWTHORNE, DR. H. T. TRACY; BACK ROW, L TO R: EDWIN DICKINSON, JOHN R. FRAZIER, AT DICKINSON'S STUDIO, 46 PEARL STREET, 1920  
COURTESY JOHN R. FRAZIER PAPERS, ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART

artist who studied with Dickinson at the League in 1954, recounted Dickinson's discussion about how he came to paint *South Wellfleet Inn* (1955). Apparently, while looking up at the building as he was painting it, Dickinson saw the top of the canvas as an object in his visual field and included it in his composition. Each time he looked up, the top of the canvas began to diminish and move to the right in his perceptual experience. This was the inception of the spiral at the bottom center of the painting.

Dickinson was fascinated by optics and the distortions that result from magnification. He often took binoculars with him on painting excursions outdoors, kept them handy in his Provincetown studio for studying the harbor, and at museums examined paintings inversely through them.

The objects Dickinson painted were intimately connected with his life. His body of work, an autobiographical iconography, contains psychological reference sighted as obliquely as the objects he depicts. He also challenged his students with nontraditional still life objects. Some of his Provincetown students remember that Dickinson brought in for them to draw—a chain, a plowshare, and a tire-shrinker. He urged them to visit garbage dumps to study the unexpected juxtapositions of objects. One might conjecture that Dickinson believed that such unconventional subjects allowed artists to capture the "site taken as seen" more truthfully because they could take a fresh, non-biased approach.

Of course, Leonardo da Vinci also advocated drawing directly from nature rather than working from a schema in the manner of medieval artists. Dickinson quietly pushed da Vinci's curiosity into a valid concept by, for example, emphasizing optical as opposed to classical perspective. Optical perspective refers to how objects sometimes appear as irregular forms on the retina. Dickinson taught his students to record these distortions rather than conform to preconceived visual ideas. Among the tools that he suggested to help his students train their eyes were the plumb line and the "finder." The plumb line

enabled the student to "see the world vertical," as one explained. It was made from a piece of red #2 carpet thread, about 20-inches long, with a #10 nail used as a weight on the end. The "finder" was a collapsible pair of L-shaped pieces of cardboard, held together by paper clips and used to frame an aspect of nature.

Though Dickinson's works are based on directly observable phenomena, they capture a reality that transcends normative vision by combining abstract and naturalistic elements into a harmonious whole. For many of his students, Dickinson represented a bridge that allowed them to connect objects in the world with abstract possibilities. Dickinson taught them to work abstractly in relationship to nature with form and color. He believed that artists produced a more accurate drawing or painting if they focused on negative space and how things connected to one another. He suggested students squint in order to eliminate detail and, thus, perceive shapes in a more simplified manner. He believed that a composition should hold up aesthetically no matter which side was up. Dickinson spoke of "unnameable color." Non-definition defined Dickinson's aesthetic philosophy. He believed that once a thing was named, the mental concept interfered with capturing the "site taken as seen."

Dickinson's students have expressed his qualities not only as a teacher, but also as a human being. Arthur Cohen, who studied with Dickinson at the Cooper Union in 1947, said that he embodied "all that an adolescent wants out of an admired elder, including the eccentricities and mannerisms one is supposed to avoid in getting ahead." Dickinson impressed many students as an artist who had wholly integrated his art with his life. When Katharine Kuh asked him about his "influences," Dickinson responded, "I suppose being awake and alive."

Mary E. Abell is writing a dissertation on Edwin Dickinson at the Graduate Center, City University New York. She was director of Long Point Gallery in Provincetown from 1988-94.



# A Drawing by **Edwin Dickinson:**

## *The Studio at 46 Pearl Street*

by Helen Dickinson Baldwin

My father, the painter Edwin Dickinson, both worked and lived in the studio at 46 Pearl Street from September 1920, probably until the mid 1930s. My father loved his studios. He loved being a painter. It was exactly what he most wanted to do all his life, and he loved the simple living his studios provided. He was happy, and liked to say that, poor though he was, spiritually he lived far better than J.P. Morgan. In *Studio, 46 Pearl Street* (1926), for him an unusually large drawing at 19 x 13 inches, he did not render his painting gear, but drew a part of his home within the studio; the comfortable corner by the warm stove with the reading light above. He fueled the stove in part with coal he picked up on his walks, great lumps of it which fell from open coal cars onto the railroad tracks.

Earlier my father lived yearround for four years in studios at Days Lumberyard. He enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1917 and was proud his name is inscribed on the World War I monument in front of Town Hall. Discharged in 1919, he visited his family, and in December went on a long-delayed trip to Europe, spending most of six months in Paris. On his return to Provincetown he was settling into the Pearl Street studio by September 1920.

This drawing of his studio/home has an expansiveness which makes it feel almost like a full room. In fact all that he shows is the south-east corner, which is made bright by the sun coming in from the great north light out of sight at the upper left. He must have been drawing on a brilliant day, for the shadows are strong all along the east wall, on the pictures and objects, the chair and stove. The tops of the carved arms of the sagging old easy chair are strongly highlighted, as is its back. To the right of the chair a veritable pool of shadow connects it to the stove, also strongly lit and shadowed. Another "pool" of black brings us to the lower right corner of the drawing.

The chair and stove occupy such a large amount of space that very little of the bare floor is visible. The stove seems at first glance exceptionally tall, but a closer look reveals that its "top" is actually a large kettle, its lid's knob and the spout drawn with almost loving care. This kettle was always on the stove to provide hot water. The stove pipe angles its way to the wall and above it is suspended a bar on which towels are drying. This arrangement was extremely practical, but I think my father always had a bar with hanging fabrics in his studios. He loved drapery, loved to paint it, and liked pointing out that it was "amenable," as he would say, to being ar-

anged however one liked and then would stay put.

There are at least eight pictures on the wall, hung according to no discernible system. Each is tipped forward slightly differently so the shadows behind them vary in size and complexity, thus enlivening the entire wall. One is unframed, only matted, and so pressed flat against the wall, but its lower right corner has come unstuck so it casts yet another kind of shadow. The drawing at the upper left has slipped in its frame, and being nearest the north light, has picked up in its glass a reflection from the north window. One drawing has a large feather plume draped over it. The only identifiable picture is above the chair. It is a portrait of a Venetian lady (ca. 1905), by Charles W. Hawthorne who had a studio next door to my father's, at 48 Pearl Street. Hawthorne offered it to my father, (Hawthorne's former student and assistant), if he would give in exchange his painting *Couple Dancing on a Table* (1913) which Hawthorne very particularly admired.

The strong shape of the hanging lamp, with the taut lines which suspend it, though not the

actual center of the drawing, in fact stabilizes the entire composition of casually arranged belongings. Father's studios were always filled with a tremendous variety of artifacts. Broken china, drapes, and furniture from his grandparents' house mingled with things that in some way attracted him from the town dump. One of his finds, a single old boot, he placed in a large glass lantern box and painted it into his *Two Figures II* (1922-1924), now hanging in the Metropolitan. The old bent harpoon and the death mask of Beethoven seen here were among the things he kept all his life. Though others might consider his studios cluttered and crowded, for my father every object had an association which was for him nourishing, even inspiring.

The decade of the '20s was strikingly productive for my father. It was at 46 Pearl Street that he painted three major and very large paintings which were to make his early reputation. Each of these paintings took many "sittings," as he liked to say. He considered that the number of three to four hour sessions of actual painting (rather than the number of years during which



EDWIN DICKINSON, *STUDIO, 46 PEARL STREET*, 1926  
PRIVATE COLLECTION, PHOTO: TATGE PHOTO, RIVERSIDE, CT





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he painted) gave the most accurate count of the time required to produce the final picture.

On October 11, 1920, his 29th birthday, he began a large composition, *An Anniversary* (1920-1921), measuring 6 x 5 feet. Floyd Clymer was one of the friends who posed for it. It was followed by *The Cello Player* (1924-1926), 5 x 4 feet, which occupied 290 sittings. *The Fossil Hunters* (1926-1928), at just over 8 x 6 feet, became a prize winner and created a sensation when shown in the prestigious Carnegie International exhibition in 1928. My father was unusual among painters of the '20s in producing such large works and these three paintings were to make his name for years to come.

In the early '20s he already had a reputation as a daring and brilliant painter and in about 1924, the young Janice and Jack Tworkov hitchhiked from New York to Provincetown to meet him. The Tworkovs were sister and brother, newly arrived from Poland. Both became noted painters, both left their mark on Provincetown, and they and my father became life-long friends.

At Pearl Street in the '20s, my father also painted portraits of good friends such as Janice Tworkov (Biala); his old friend Barby Brown (Malicoat), who posed for *The Fossil Hunters*; Elsbeth Miller (daughter of painter Richard E. Miller), with whom he used to go ice skating on Shank Painter pond; and Pat Foley, a Hawthorne student, during their courtship in 1927. When he met Pat he was already a good friend of her eldest sister Edith Foley (Shay) who was one of the "Smooleys." The Smooleys were vibrant figures in the social world of Provincetown's artists and writers. These four friends, Edie Foley, Katie Smith (Dos Passos), her brother Bill Smith, and Stella Roof, lived in a house bought from Mary Heaton Vorse and combined their last names to make the group name.

My father's parents and siblings called him Edwin, but everyone in Provincetown knew him as "Dick," and Dick he remained for the rest of his life. In the fall of 1928 he hurried to finish *The Fossil Hunters*, so he and Pat could be married in New York on October 31st. Dick and Pat spent the winter in his father's cottage on Cayuga Lake in Sheldrake, New York, and returned to Provincetown in late April 1929. They lived first in the little mansard-roofed house beside the studio and later in the studio itself. The studio (today still much as it was) had basic plumbing and a sleeping loft. Before his marriage Dick's sister Antoinette, known as Tibi, lived many years in Provincetown, keeping house for her brother, and Cy Young moved the little mansard house to Pearl Street for her to live in. Her brother's wide circle of friends became hers as well. As late as the 1960s I remember Provincetown friends calling out to my father, "And how's Tibi?"

Tibi so loved Provincetown and 46 Pearl Street that in 1931 she came from Sheldrake, New York to have her wedding there. With her father officiating, she and Henry Van Sickle were married in the studio on November 12th. I was six months old and slept through it all in a basket set below the north light.

My father was an extremely gregarious and sociable man. He loved parties and evenings at the Frederick Waughs listening to music. He loved walking across the dunes to the back shore where he befriended the men of the Life Saving Service, who walked the ocean beach day and night watching for wrecked ships. He and painter Henry Sutter liked to walk to the ocean beach and stamp out in immense letters such names as Beethoven or Bach, thus paying a kind of homage. Henry and Dick were also practical jokers and at Days Lumberyard in the winter of 1915-1916, they painted portraits of each other on a single canvas and entered it in an Art Association show under the name Dimitri Vasclav.

Dick and Caro Campbell were long-time close friends and they might go to chamber music concerts or the movies. He was an ardent chess player, including blindfold chess. He and Floyd Clymer or Dick Parmenter sailed as often as they could. He and Tibi, and later Pat, often entertained in the studio over tea or supper and they liked to dance. He and artist Florida Duncan were particular friends. She died early in 1931, the year I was born, and in her honor I was named Helen Florida.

My father always worked by stable natural light coming only from the north; never by artificial light or the glaring south light from the studio's door and window. They were kept covered when he was working. Born in 1891, though a child of the 19th century, he became enthralled when he went to New York to art school in 1910, by all he could see and learn of early modern art abroad. It was typical of him to choose to draw only a small section of his studio, and at an oblique angle. He delineated forms with both hard pencil edges and soft boundaries, as with the shadow on the back of the stove or the harpoon on the wall. He was ready to render objects incompletely, as with the left hand picture on the wall and the stove pipe and the picture above it. The drawing has a poised equilibrium between the fully drawn and the things which continue beyond its boundaries; especially at the top where the wall carries a horizontal strip of moulding, but seems to rise beyond it almost infinitely far. He appears to render every item with much the same surface whether it be metal, cloth, or glass. He had an uncanny ability to render the most homely, even decrepit objects, in a way that gives them a kind of grandeur. I think the effect of the drawing is that of a fascinating place. One does not think first of its poverty. There is no bravura to this drawing. Its effect is that of an unusually large still life.

My father died in 1978 after 50 years as an artist. His drawing of 46 Pearl Street is so distinctive and original it cannot be mistaken for the work of any other artist. To those who knew him, the man who lived here is immediately recognizable. To those who know his work, the drawing is as individual to him as his signature.

*Helen Dickinson Baldwin is an art historian and the daughter of Edwin Dickinson. She is preparing the catalogue raisonné of his work.*



# The Journals of **Jon Schueler** selection by Jennifer Liese

Jon Schueler (1916-1992), like many of his contemporary Abstract Expressionists, sought rustic refuge for inspiration. Yet he went quite farther afield than the East End of Long Island or the tip of Cape Cod. In 1957 Schueler traveled to Scotland and found a landscape that spoke deeply to him, and through him, in his often moody paintings, seemingly swollen like eyes after a cry. In the following excerpts from his journals and correspondence, one finds telling similarities and divergences between this foreign land and our own Provincetown. As here, the Scottish seacoast offers wondrous beauty and the allure of the fisherman's life. Yet there the land is high and rising, "springing from the sea," while here it is low and, if anything, slowly sinking. And while both places are reigned by their light, there it is gray, here it is white.

Selected from *The Sound of Sleat: A Painter's Life*, (Picador, 1999) these excerpts in no way represent the whole of an extraordinary portrait of an artist confronting many demons, external and internal, as he navigated the tricky waters of the mid-century art world. Although Schueler showed early on with Leo Castelli and mingled with luminaries, his work remained obscure. Schueler's unquenchable attraction to so remote a land (he returned to Scotland for extended stays throughout his life), and his consequent self-exile from New York, surely played a part in keeping him below the sight lines. The release of Schueler's book, edited and ushered in by his widow, Magda Salvesen, and Diane Consinean, may do something to resurrect his work. At the very least, in its raw honesty (the book is painfully rife with insecurities, anger, disillusion) it provides a vital alternative to the oft-repeated myths surrounding many documents of Abstract Expressionism.

## **Edinburgh, 16 September 1957**

I'm finally coming up for air—but slowly. The crossing was great. On the last day we passed just to the north of the Scilly Islands, which lie off Land's End—and they were beautiful beyond belief. Rough, craggy, with a gray, sometimes misty sky. Waves beating against the rocks, throwing spray 50 feet into the air. Dimly seen views of sandy inlets and green fields—tantalizing, like a striptease. The light of the sun breaking through silver white, hard on the turbulent water, blinding, hard and powerful. God—this is what I had come 3000 miles to see—and this was the first thing I saw! I could ask for no more.

Saturday I walked all over Edinburgh—truly one of the most beautiful cities in the world. It's beyond description. I walked up the steep hill and went through the old castle and I looked out over the city to the hills to the north, and everything was as I wanted it to be. I kept marveling at the light and at the color, and something struck me personally and I couldn't figure out what it was. The next day when I was riding along on a bus in the country (on an all-day bus tour), I was noticing the same thing again and I



JON SCHUELER, *THE SOUND OF SLEAT JUNE NIGHT, XI*, 1970 COLLECTION THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL GALLERY OF MODERN ART

realized that I was seeing all of the violets and ultramarine reds I have been putting into my paintings for the last few months.

## **Mallaig Vaig, 7 October 1957**

Part of the thing here for me is to meet something head-on—to figure out what I want to do, and then to overcome everything that comes with it. Now, this part of Scotland is exactly what I wanted—visually. I have everything I could hope for. I had to get through the rest, such as cold, but more important—emotional difficulties—such as loneliness and all the craziness that can go with it. I think you have to come out the other side of loneliness, or one is forever dependent on other people—and I'm out not to be—



SCHUELER IN MALLAIG, WINTER OF 1957-58

it's absolutely necessary for my work. I was miserable for a while. I was literally held together by the landscape. I went through my low of all lows Sunday, September 30—and even on that day I took a long walk and was overwhelmed by the beauty that surrounded me.

I have a fine studio now—gleaming white—the light comes in great—though it's from the northwest—it doesn't make much difference because the sun is seldom out anyway. I have one of the best easels I've ever had. I have some stretchers designed better than I have ever used. All this thanks to Mr. Grieve, the joiner, who takes quite an interest in me, and lends me tools, etc. I'm getting to know everyone in town, and it's sort of fun because I realize from things I've heard that no one quite figures me out, and they wonder what I'm doing here. I've met Jim Manson, the captain of the fishing boat, an old-timer. The boat is going into the water at high tide tonight and tomorrow noon we're going to sea. Now, damn it, it will probably be cold and cramped and wet and rough, but it will be as wonderful as it can be. That's why I don't want you to worry about me—part of the wonder here, part of everything that is great, and everything that is making me terribly excited and full of life—part of all that is the rough part—the weather, the primitive conditions, etc. The weather! Without the weather I wouldn't have what I came after. Today I cycled to Morar (a little town along the coast to the south) and I went out of my mind. Every day is a gray day

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here, and I've noticed more and more the blues and the purples. But from Morar—out to sea—the cloudy sky and the water and the islands (Eigg and Rhum loom huge in the distance, menacing, sharply defined in outline, but hazy and indistinct in content) everything was a deep, deep blue—the most penetrating, somber, magnificent, symphonic blue I have ever seen. It was a very simple subject—yet immense and about the whole world and the whole universe, and about all the great throbbing tragedy of movement and life and by God, it was about everything I've been thinking about, and I just have to raise myself to the point where I can truly feel it and express it, and where I get far, far beyond the point of techniques and doesn't this look just like some Impressionist, and whatever anyone might be whispering in my ear—you or critics or buyers or dealers or friends or artists or enemies.

## Mallaig Vaig, 13 October 1957

At the wheel of the *Margaret Ann* on Friday—dusk, heavy sea, turbulent tides and wind, boat pitching and rolling so that you could only stand up by hanging on, spray over the decks and against the windows of the wheelhouse. I loved it loved it loved it. If I ever give up painting, it will be to go to sea. Jim Manson—53, man of quiet courage, singleness of purpose. He loves his work, gets as excited as a kid by a catch, knows his business and every tide and rock and ripple. He had me handling the wheel from the first day aboard, when we were traveling through a heavy swell. On Friday I took her from South Uist to a loch on the northwest corner of Skye. We fished there unsuccessfully. Then he took her down the coast—notoriously bad tides—heavy sea, churning waters—sailing nearly within touching distance of the cliffs—peering almost straight up to see the guy hanging over the rail in the lighthouse far above.

## Mallaig Vaig, 21 October 1957

It's a relatively new land, so it really is in the process of birth—springing from the sea—and it hasn't had time to get worn down to a pattern of regularity. High in the hills are moors which are constantly bogged. Rock formations are thrust up in every direction imaginable—including straight up. And it's caught up in the complicated, primeval birth-pang hysteria of weather that's really weather. I could stand in any one spot, and literally from minute to minute, quite often, the entire thing changes and what was real one minute has become effervescent the next. This is what knocks me out. I've never seen so much damn color, and so much change of color. I'm sure I've dreamed about it, but I didn't realize how rich it would be—and best of all, all sorts of color in the sky, working into and out of that in the land, because the sky is just as raw and new as the land, and it hasn't formed into

regular patterns, either. Just when I think I've seen everything, I look out the window—like tonight before sunset...and whoosh, a yellowish umber form was spread across the sky and threatening to annihilate the Bungalow at Mallaig Vaig.

God is creating here so fast and so powerfully and so abundantly and so magnificently that it's going to be one hell of a challenge to try to create something that will equal or (when I'm feeling particularly manic and filled with rage at just seeing all this) outdo such a prodigal, intense, potent, imaginative job.

## Romasaig, 15 November 1970

One time I saw Norman Mailer at a party in Provincetown. (I had met him 10 years before.) After I realized that he was deliberately avoiding me and, after talking, avoiding me again, I asked him, smiling, "Norman, I want to ask you something. Do you hate my guts?" Norman, smiling, "As a matter of fact, Schueler, yes." "Why?" "Well, I'll tell you. Before I met you, I'd read something you had written about your painting and was very much impressed by it." Pause. "And then I saw your work." Norman smiled. Schueler laughed.

But was this just a beautifully clever insult? It could have had a glimmer of truth. It could have been the whole truth. It wouldn't take a Mailer to pose this endless possibility. It hangs over the artist at every moment of creation.

Wednesday on the *Margaret Ann*: The fisherman and the artist, by what illusion are they driven? For the fishermen are driven men. Of that, I have no doubt. How else can a man exist for days without sleep, doing the most incredibly arduous and dangerous work, and then come back for more the next week and the next. The fisherman, to be sure, gambles the chances of a large catch and big money. But this isn't enough for the fire and passion demanded in the work. He talks of crans and prices, but he, like the artist, lives the urgency of the damned.

This year I am very productive. I know enough about creativity to know that any day could be the last. I think that some of my productivity now is due to the fact that I have come home to Mallaig. Dear Bob [Schueler's writing is often in the form of an open-ended letter to writer and friend, B.H. Friedman], I have finally done it. I really think I have. All these years, as you well know, since 1958 when I left Mallaig Vaig, I felt that it would be most important to my painting that I go back and work there again. New York was too abstract. I knew I needed the sea and the West Highland sky outside the door, to walk into, to feel each day, so that the pulse and beat, and tender line and light turned to light, would become my eye and thereby inform my work and dream alike. I was 1000 percent right.



# A Wellfleet Memoir

by Marian Cannon Schlesinger

Every summer from the middle of the '50s on, my husband, Arthur, and I spent a month in Wellfleet on Cape Cod, first in a delightfully primitive shack on one of the high sand cliffs looking out over the great outside beach, with nothing between us and the coast of Europe but the heaving Atlantic Ocean. One woke early to see the gorgeous uncluttered rise of the sun and slid down the dunes to take a first dip in the sea, the beach entirely empty as far as the eye could reach. Housekeeping was nil—merely a swish of the broom as one swept the sand out the door. Often we dined on mussels, culled by the children at the mouth of the Pamet River in Truro. Those were the days before mussels had become a fixture of the American diet and they were free for the taking.

The beach was a gathering place for the various denizens of the woods and the ponds, friends like Mary McCarthy and Bowdoin Broadwater, Harry and Elena Levin, Alfred Kazin and his wife, Anne, and many others, especially the author of *The Last Hurrah*, Ed O'Connor. When we knew him first in those early days his only form of transportation was his bicycle, by which he got to the beach from his boarding house in town, always laden with several books and dressed in his disreputable bathing trunks and prehistoric leather sandals. He was a merry man, a droll man, and the magnet on the beach. Children adored him. Coming over the crest of the dunes one swept the sand with one's eyes to find where "Big Ed" (as the children called him) had planted himself, his ancient terry cloth jacket jammed under his head as a pillow. He loved the big rolling surf as it came off the Atlantic and the heat of the sand after the champagne-like sensation of the cool and brilliant water. He could idle away hours lying in the sun reading and chatting until one wondered how he ever got around to writing all those books. He had in fact arisen at five in the morning and worked at least four solid hours before meandering as though without a care in the world to the ocean.

There was never a man whose good fortune and success gave his friends more pleasure. He was incapable of arousing emotions of envy and jealousy. People loved the fact that *The Last Hurrah* was such a great best seller and made Ed some money. He used always to refer to the book as "*Hurrah*" as though it were embodied in some way and had a life of its own. With his royalties he built a wonderful modern house, designed by another denizen of the woods, Serge Chermayeff. The only flaw from my point of view was the dread highly varnished staircase, which modern architects insist on, with their death dealing sharp edges, if one has the misfortune to slip.



MARIAN CANNON SCHLESINGER, SLOUGH POND, WELFLEET

At one point Arthur tried to get him together with the President but Ed was resistant. I think he rather disapproved of Kennedy, Ed being a good Catholic. I am sure that the President would have found Ed a delight as all his friends did. But there is nothing like an Irishman against an Irishman when it comes down to it. Ed turned in his bicycle for a Porsche and married his lovely wife Veniette and died too soon.

As time went on we acquired another delightful shack on Slough Pond, a five minute walk from the beach on a sandy path skirted by beach plum bushes and low growing wild cranberries and in the early summer permeated by the intoxicating smell of pink wild roses. Another sort of sunrise took place on our peaceful pond, the rays of the morning sun filtering through the branches of the gnarled pines, so Japanese in feeling. The only sounds were the intermittent calls of the quail as they rustled through the underbrush and the almost noiseless splash of the Chermayeffs, our neighbors, and their two German Shepherds as they took their morning swim across the pond. Such peace! But not for long. For when Serge got back to his deck the stentorian roar of his commands to his dogs and his perpetual demands and complaints to his wife, Barbara, carried undiminished across the water. He used to complain bitterly about the noise our children made; perhaps justifiably. Some years later I met him at a cocktail party, and had the pleasure of teasing him with "really Serge, your yelling at your dogs and your grandchildren is beginning to hurt my ears." He was the lord of the pond and a passionate environmentalist and conservationist. One was grateful to him for his sensitive ears; at one point he banished an obtrusive motor boat offensive to the spirit of the pond and to us all by the furious outrage of his remarks and of his personality. The poor owner could not stand up against it and retired his motor boat for good.

The woods were full of Hungarians, psychiatrists, writers, artists, atomic physicists, and especially architects, among them Marcel Breuer and Chermayeff. Knowing them and their

houses was for me an artistic education. For the first time I saw the use of decks as outside auxiliary rooms, built of redwood, which attained through the years a wonderful dark patina. Decks have now become standard additions to many American houses but back in the '50s they were rather a rarity, at least in the East. The interiors of their houses were utterly simple and uncluttered, a single sling chair or director's chair in discrete beige or oatmeal colored canvas, tatami on the floors and in the case of Breuer, a beautifully designed wooden couch which I took note of and copied years later for myself. It was a lesson in "Less is More."

We shared a party line telephone with the Chermayeffs and there was a certain amount of complaint when Arthur served in the Kennedy Administration and tied up the line with talks to the White House. It may have seemed exotic to begin with but after a while a pain in the neck to the Chermayeffs. We finally broke down and got a private line.

As Edmund Wilson grew too old to huff and puff over the dunes to the beach he used to come and have a dip in our pond from time to time. He would arrive with his dear wife, Elena, an aristocratic figure often dressed in a brilliant blue shift that matched her glorious blue eyes. Edmund would wade into the water up to his knees, in his oversized bathing trunks and his droopy pork pie hat on his head, crooning to his dog Brown the while. His relationship to his dog always seemed to me his profoundest. It was hard to think of him as a sex object with his rolly poly figure and his skinny little white etiolated legs and white pudgy hands. In the meantime Elena would sit with me on the deck and very kindly let me play chess with her. I was so bad, always making the worst possible moves, but she was generous and indulgent. I remember her often going barefoot, as was the case with most of us, and recall that her legs were absolutely straight all the way from the back of the knee to the ankle without a curve. She was a passionate Democrat (an interesting phenomena in a member of the Mumm champagne family) and a great reader. Some years after Edmund's death she wrote to me after I sent her a copy of my book, *Snatched from Oblivion*, saying that she was sure "Edmund would have loved it and would have wanted to write something about it." Too bad he wasn't still around, I thought!

Going to dinner with Edmund and Elena was always interesting. Edmund played the part of pater familias after Elena had produced some succulent meal, carving the roast and serving the vegetables, the only domestic chores I feel sure



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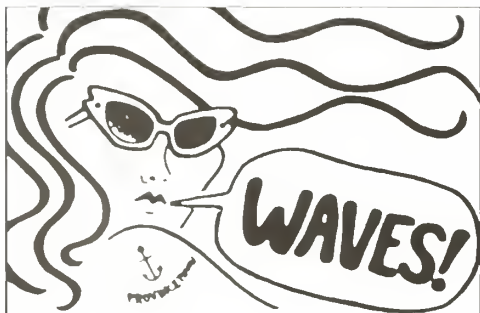
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he ever performed. The delightful living room in their little 19th-century sea captain's house near the center of the village was white, white, white, with orange and yellow nasturtiums in a pretty glass bowl the only touch of color beside the blue and white patchwork quilt that hung behind the couch. Edmund was a charming host, always asking after one's comfort but then yelling to Elena to bring this or that. He loved to play solitaire on the table in front of the couch, but conversation more often than not consisted of monologues. If by any chance someone tossed up a subject, Edmund might run with it. Or if he was not interested he would just as easily say, "I don't want to talk about that!" He was not one to make concessions or waste time with other people's interests if they did not interest him. Yet he could do such disarming things. He once planted a mechanical butterfly in a book in Widener Library and then wrote Arthur suggesting a quote that would be of interest to him in the same book in the same page in which the butterfly was planted. When opened, the butterfly flew up into Arthur's face! He was a clever "magician" and prestidigitator and did amusing shows for the children in Wellfleet, often in collaboration with Ed O'Connor, a rare team indeed.

He was always very appreciative of my paintings and bought two of them which still hang in the house in Wellfleet. And he paid me the ultimate compliment when he asked me to draw one of my conventionalized horses with his diamond tipped stylus on one of the window panes of the house. I think I was in good company, Tchelitchev among others having left his mark. We both shared a liking for Edward Lear's drawings, not only his witty illustrations for his book of limericks but his wonderful architectural and landscape watercolors and wash drawings of Rome, Southern Italy, Greece and countries of the Levant. And knowing my interest in Lear and in India, he thoughtfully gave me a book from his library; a copy of Lear's account of his expedition to India back in the 1880s full of enchanting illustrations of oxen, elephants, palmy shores, Hindu temples, and Rajput palaces. I treasure it.

What good fortune to have enjoyed Wellfleet summers in those days, with good friends, empty beaches, peaceful ponds, and an occasional deer crossing the dirt road in the woods as one drove home in the evening. Even Route 6 was more like an uncluttered country lane compared to its present incarnation. Over the years new people have discovered Wellfleet and the charms of our woods and our ponds and our great Atlantic beach. But I am glad that I knew it when it was a secret known only to a lucky few.

*Marian Cannon Schlesinger, a painter, illustrator, and writer, is the author of Snatched from Oblivion: A Cambridge Memoir (Gale Hill Books), and the children's book, San Bao and his Adventures in Peking. This essay is a chapter from her work in progress, Facets of a Life, the second volume of her memoirs.*

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# Provincetown Cleans House

by Karen Christel Krahulik

Chris Busa once compared Provincetown to a boxing ring, a psychiatrist's office, an artist's studio, a poet's study, and a lover's bed to argue that, as in these arenas, in Provincetown "ordinary rules are suspended in order to establish a privileged atmosphere." In this comparison, Busa touches upon a characteristic of Provincetown that has lured experimental visitors from near and far—"artistic license." Here we can express ourselves in ways that might elsewhere seem offensive, abnormal, or intrusive. Artists, poets, and writers of varying sexual orientations have taken advantage of this freedom of expression for no less than 100 years.

For the most part, Provincetown has graciously allowed the results of artistic license to spill from studios, studies, and even beds, into its streets. Perhaps the most extreme and visible manifestation of this creative spillage takes form in female impersonation. Today we value our drag queens, appreciate their performance as an art form, one Mark Doty has called "a kind of cultural guerilla theater." But Provincetown's unique history of "tolerance" regarding gender-role transgression and homosexuality is not without exceptions.

In the summer of 1949, ironically just as artists and writers came together for Forum 49 to expound on artistic freedom and democratic ideals, Provincetown lashed out with unprecedented force against its vast and growing gay population, targeting specifically men who dressed like women. Homophobic attacks against gay men had assumed subtle but inconsistent forms from the 1930s onward, yet in 1949 Provincetown honed in on what many referred to as the "boys problem." Observing this post-war homophobic frenzy, it becomes clear that during certain historical moments, even in privileged places like Provincetown, artistic license, in the case of gender performance, went only so far.

In 1949 Paul C. Ryan of the *Worcester Telegram* defined the "queer question" in a column entitled "Provincetown 'Boys' A Problem." Ryan revealed concerns about gender mannerisms and clothing, official control over queers, and the willingness of townsfolk to welcome and house gay men and lesbians. He congratulated the area for its successful recreation business. Though some "visitors were living in converted chicken coops," he wrote, P'town offers "quaintness, old dwellings, the sand dunes and sea," which attract the "legitimate artist and art student." But on the downside: "P-Towners have found an increasing number of 'tourists' who flock into the town in early Summer and attempt to give the place a little 'atmosphere.' These 'boys' as the townies call them, are somewhat of a problem. The owners of rooming houses, and nine



"TODAY WE VALUE OUR DRAG QUEENS" CARNIVAL, 1995

out of ten homes have guest rooms, are divided on allowing such visitors to move in. Local enforcement officials cannot cope with the situation until some of the 'boys' get into trouble. Then they are heaved out of town. But for every two that go, two more appear."

Having defined Provincetown's "problem," Ryan described "the boys," perhaps with a tinge of admiration, as particularly stylish: "They are a colorful group as to attire, or lack of it, in a community which is not surprised by what anyone wears. They wear the latest sport togs, have real or synthetic suntans, and the most orderly hairdo to be found anywhere. And they will argue over their right to be different."

Ryan paints a vivid picture of Provincetown's postwar gay scene. Far from rendering Provincetown's queer population as self-loathing, discrete inverts, as many writers, sexologists, and psychiatrists did in the cold war era, he instead emphasized the fun-loving and festive nature of Provincetown's queer community. Ryan's column suggests that onlookers marked queer men rather than queer women as problematic, and lends credence to reports that by the late 1940s Provincetown was teeming with "boys." The striking issue, however, seems to be not the number of "boys," but their flamboyance, their insistence on, indeed celebration of, their right to transgress conventional gender boundaries.

Shortly after Provincetown's 1950 summer season, a number of local officials reexamined Provincetown's "boys problem." As business owners catered to and thus encouraged gay men and lesbians to vacation in Provincetown, Police Chief William N. Rogers, at a loss in managing "the boys" himself, went straight to Provincetown's Chamber of Commerce. Rogers blamed business owners who employ "the boys" and "provide them with quarters and are not loathe to provide them with congregating places." While local policemen frequently arrested scores of "boys" for "rude and disorderly" conduct, the *Advocate* reported that Rogers asked the Chamber to support a tougher set of town by-laws so that the "exhibitionists" could be prosecuted. The Chamber President agreed and raised the anxiety level, claiming that each season "the number of 'The Boys' continues to increase...and the abnormal actions of many become more public and brazen with the result

that more and more normal people turn away from the town in disgust...the problem will be difficult to handle but it must be met and solved before the Summer trade of the town is seriously damaged and before some climax in abnormality occurs."

When the Board of Selectmen heeded Rogers call and took action with a set of homophobic regulations, it meant to "clean house," to rid the tip of Cape Cod of its most flamboyant residents and to dissuade less obvious homosexuals from getting too comfortable. The nascent regulations, which officials hand-delivered to each licensed

liquor establishment, stated, "No licensee shall employ or allow to perform on the licensed premises any so-called female impersonators, nor employ, cater to, or encourage the licensed premises to become the habitual gathering place for homosexuals of either sex."

Journalists, no doubt influenced by the ripple effect of McCarthyism, were quick to congratulate Provincetown on its crackdown. The "10 commandments," as residents referred to the new regulations, mobilized a series of debates, beginning with a supportive editorial in the *Boston Traveler*. "That clean refreshing breeze drifting this way from Cape Cod undoubtedly is related to the fact that Provincetown has just slammed the door against an invasion of homosexuals," the writer cheered. Provincetown has given these "undesirables" a "swift...kick in the pants" and other Cape towns are doing the same to avoid the "unsavory mess" and the economic "damage that was done to Provincetown." "It was Provincetown's own fault," the editorial proclaimed, for allowing "female impersonators" to drive "away the solid middle-class vacationists who didn't want themselves or their children exposed to embarrassing sidewalk scenes." "Now," it stated triumphantly, "the selectmen have picked up the soap and gave the town a bath."

Provincetown's homophobic officials ultimately failed in their attempts to bar female impersonators and homosexuals from exercising their rights to artistic license. While their failure can be attributed to several factors, perhaps most important is that the majority of Provincetown's residents celebrated creativity in all its forms and valued freedom more than McCarthyism, unjust witch hunts, and homophobic tirades. While Provincetown celebrates 100 years as an art colony, let us not lose sight of the struggles and tensions its residents and visitors have worked through as artistic license made its home at land's end.

*Karen Christel Krahulik is the director of the Center for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Life at Duke University. She is currently completing a doctoral dissertation at New York University on Provincetown's 20th-century social and cultural history.*



# Mary McCarthy's Fictional Wellfleet:

## Sex and Sin in *A Charmed Life*

by Claire Sprague

Even when Mary McCarthy (1912-1989) was called "the fastest girl in the intellectual world," she was an also ran compared to her second husband, Edmund Wilson (1895-1972), the celebrated cultural critic. Her intellectuality and her gender were often sticking points for male critics. John Aldridge found her novels "crammed with celebration and bitchiness." Hilton Kramer called her "our leading bitch intellectual." Were these gendered attacks a sign that McCarthy was beating the men at their own game? Perhaps her active sexuality was another competitive thorn. She spoke out on subjects forbidden to women, daring to measure, for example, the penises she had known. She intimidated even her closest male friends. One of them, Dwight Macdonald, remarked, "When pretty girls smile at you [and Mary was pretty], you feel terrific. When Mary smiles at you, you look to see if your fly is open." Thus Mary McCarthy both attracted and repelled. Norman Mailer crowned her "our First Lady of Letters" while Norman Podhoretz found "Dark Lady" more accurate than "First Lady."

If the novel itself is "the Great Bitch in one's life," as Norman Mailer says, then women novelists are anachronisms to begin with. Disqualified by their anatomy from "having a piece of her" (the phrasing is Mailer's), women cannot participate in the male novelist's flesh-eating game. In another essay, while criticizing McCarthy's "lack of reach," Mailer does allow that McCarthy "may finally get tough enough to go with the boys." That is, she rejects what is (presumed) female for what is (presumed) male. Greatness remains inseparable from maleness.

Ten years after their divorce, in 1955, McCarthy published her exorcism of Edmund Wilson in *A Charmed Life*, in which their real-life figures appear as the characters Martha Sinnott and Miles Murphy. How an artist reworks experience into art is endlessly fascinating. McCarthy herself says it best: "I can't help plagiarizing from real life." Of course, one could read *A Charmed Life* without knowing anything about McCarthy's private life. But the fiction/life parallels and reworkings, in a novel so richly indebted to verifiable autobiographical events, are deeply revealing. As one critic puts it, "She's always writing *romans à clef* and then handing you the *clef*."

Both McCarthy and Wilson spent some years, both separately and together, in Wellfleet, which, in *A Charmed Life*, becomes New Leeds. In this

"seacoast of Bohemia," New Leedsians drink a lot, talk a lot, and produce little. McCarthy's satiric thrusts are exquisite. She has Miles comment about the community: "Everybody was 'artistic,' and nobody was an artist." She denies autobiographical indebtedness by changing details—Wilson is shorter than Murphy, doesn't have "jellied green eyes," doesn't smoke, doesn't write successful plays, etc. Yet she advises in her

discovered. The French vicomte, Paul d'Hamonville, with "his rich air of fraudulence," runs the liquor store and sells antiques. Sandy Gray, the "former Communist...made sandals in the summertime." Another painter, Dolly Lamb, doesn't know if she emerged from her single sexual experience virgin or non-virgin. (Years later McCarthy apologized to the real-life Dolly.)

But exorcising Edmund Wilson becomes the focus of an exercise deeply interfused with where McCarthy/Martha are as women/wives/writers. *A Charmed Life* was published during the period named for another McCarthy, a decade considered a nadir for female accomplishment. A contemporary *Esquire* piece coined the term "Mary McCarthyism" for McCarthy's acid attacks. During these years, McCarthy, practically single-handedly, focused on a woman's relation to power in and out of marriage. *A Charmed Life* could be a first in its use of an unwanted pregnancy to pick up traditionally male concerns about fate, contingency, and truth. The novel both undercuts and underlines the gap between women's lives and high seriousness and validates the protagonist's dilemma. (Why then hasn't the women's movement claimed McCarthy as an ally or a forerunner?)

Martha wants two things out of her New Leeds stay—a finished play and a pregnancy. She gets both, but her pregnancy arrives "in such a way that you wished you had not wished it"—the father may be her ex-husband, Miles, instead of her husband, John.

McCarthy makes her fictional self childless when in life she was not, having borne a son with Wilson. For Mary/Martha pregnancy is a desirable part of womanhood. Like Mary, Martha is attuned to other "womanly" activities. She loves to cook, to sew, even likes "domestic chores: the smell of furniture polish, the damp hot scorch of fresh ironing." She's frank and detailed about menstruation, calling it "the curse." (Another fictional first?) She ticks off her pregnancy symptoms thoroughly—sensitive breasts, euphoria, then "delicious lassitude." She's already had one abortion. She knows the routine. The illegality of abortion increases a woman's psychic trauma and forces even middle class women like Martha to scramble for money and an abortionist. Even after *Roe v. Wade* Martha would still have agonized.

Ten years after their divorce, Martha and Miles "have at it" on the sofa (Martha will not use the marriage bed.) The description of their love-making is brilliant largely because



MARY MCCARTHY. DRAWING BY DAVID LEVINE. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS. © 1987, NYREV, INC.

posthumous *Intellectual Memoirs* (1992), "What happened is explained in *A Charmed Life*." How extraordinary! Imagine a writer referring readers to her fiction for factual truth. McCarthy forces us to rethink conventional genre labels by doing exactly that.

In *A Charmed Life*, McCarthy finds a fit subject and locale for pillorying pretension and snobbery. Besides Mary as Martha Sinnott and Wilson as Miles, there's Bowden Broadwater, Mary's third husband (her second in the novel), as John Sinnott, and Elena Wilson, Edmund's fourth wife (his third in the novel), as Helen Murphy. Other New Leeds/Wellfleet characters have their identifiable counterparts. The wealthy Coes, Warren and Jane, affect simplicity by living without a phone and using jelly glasses for drinking wine. (One of Jane's many plans for simplifying is thrice economical—sheep can be lawnmowers and providers of fertilizer and wool as well.) Warren, a painter, discovers he doesn't want to be



McCarthy dares to be funny and grotesque about the sexual act. Martha thinks, "It had been an exercise in gluttony; they had both grasped for a morsel they did not really want." Martha sees all the comedy in their "one screw;" her chief worry "had been that [Miles] would break the sofa." Her zipper won't unzip (no Jongian "zipless fuck" here); her beads break. For his part Miles thinks, "She was too ironic a girl not to see that one screw, more or less, could not make much difference, when she had already laid it on the line for him about five hundred times."

Their "making the beast with two backs," so briefly described, is among the most vivid scenes in the novel. It also happens to be the only sex scene. John and Martha never "have at it." The seduction passage is filled with clichés. Miles' stereotypically male assumption is that Martha "wanted it, obviously, or she would not have asked him in." He had felt the same way about Martha's attitude toward sex during their marriage—"in the end she wanted it." (His certainties are a common rationale for marital rape.) So sex is short, violent, and unromantic. Men want it and go for it; women play the game of resistance.

Making Martha childless and possibly pregnant by Miles maximizes the comedy and the pain in the novel. McCarthy devotes an entire chapter to cataloging Martha's doubts, symptoms and options about her pregnancy—from early euphoria to desperation. Should she abort or carry to term? How could she have conceived during a supposedly "safe" period? Who is the father? Miles? John? How could it belong to Miles: "If it were Miles', she would be throwing up and rejecting it." The doctor is no help. "Forget about the other man," he urges, "He doesn't count statistically." What if the child looks like Miles? Shall I tell John or live a lie for a lifetime? "You think too much," the doctor asserts bluntly. Martha cannot stand not knowing. Not knowing is a form of fudging, akin to lying. At best, the doctor's attitude is slothful. Of course, he will neither perform the abortion nor help her find someone who will.

On her way to Boston to have the abortion, Martha has that moment of insight and revelation required in classical drama before catastrophe. She feels unburdened. Whether she tells John or not, things will be all right between them. In examining her motives and options, Martha had wondered whether, in straining after an abortion, she was "seeking the impossible"—to undo her tie to Murphy. When she dies, Martha is, ironically, about to compound one sin with another, the "sin" of abortion. The injunction to "sin not" which she took on when she chose to inherit John's surname (we never learn her birth name), must be taken as an ideal. To "sin not" echoes the "charmed life" John says New Leedsians live.

Martha's life is the reverse of "charmed." It ends in sin and death; it ends in the stuff of tragedy, yet from first sentence to last the novel is seriocomic. At the very moment of her death, not by an abortion but by an automobile accident, Martha can quip, "in a wild flash of hu-

mor," about her "fatal mistake; in New Leeds, after sundown, she would have been safer on the wrong side of the road."

Is Martha's death, on the road to Boston, punishment for a sin committed and one about to be committed? The text says yes; the text says no. Consider a self-judgment Martha makes as she looks back on her relationship with Miles: "The fatalistic side of her character accepted Miles as a punishment for the sin of having slept with him [long ago, before their marriage] when she did not love him, when she loved, she still felt, someone else." Affairs with and without love were not new to Martha or Mary. (McCarthy was living with Philip Rahv when she met Wilson.) That's not the point. The point about the Martha/Miles relationship is its singularity. It confounds both the actual and the fictional selves. Why Martha bedded with Miles at all mystifies her still; her action makes no sense: "Just at this point, when she looked at him and then looked backward, there was a terrifying blank." For a character like Martha, for a creator like Mary, the irrational is indeed terrifying.

It's not easy to say whether Martha's death is related to her "sins," an accident, or a comment on contingency. Martha describes love "as a sort of diabolical possession." This possession explains the dark underside of this very funny, very irreverent novel. We must decide that causation in the novel is multiple, contradictory, ambiguous—confuting, perhaps mocking, the protagonist's need to know. In *How I Grew* McCarthy describes herself as "a true girl of my generation, bent on taking the last trace of sin out of sex." The sin is still in sex in *A Charmed Life*. The novel may have exorcised Edmund Wilson; it did not exorcise sexual guilt. Although the novel tells us Martha's death was accidental, the emotional truth of the novel suggests it was suicide.

McCarthy's Martha may be exceptional in her sexual adventures; she has even had multiple simultaneous affairs. But her domestic delights and skills and her desire for a baby make her very traditional. Perhaps her self-hatred and vulnerability also belong to traditional female baggage. McCarthy protagonists, like McCarthy herself, cannot do without men or marriage. Nor can they do without careers. McCarthy clearly believes marriage and independence can co-exist; Martha completes her play while she thinks she may be pregnant. These two major events become indivisible in the novel.

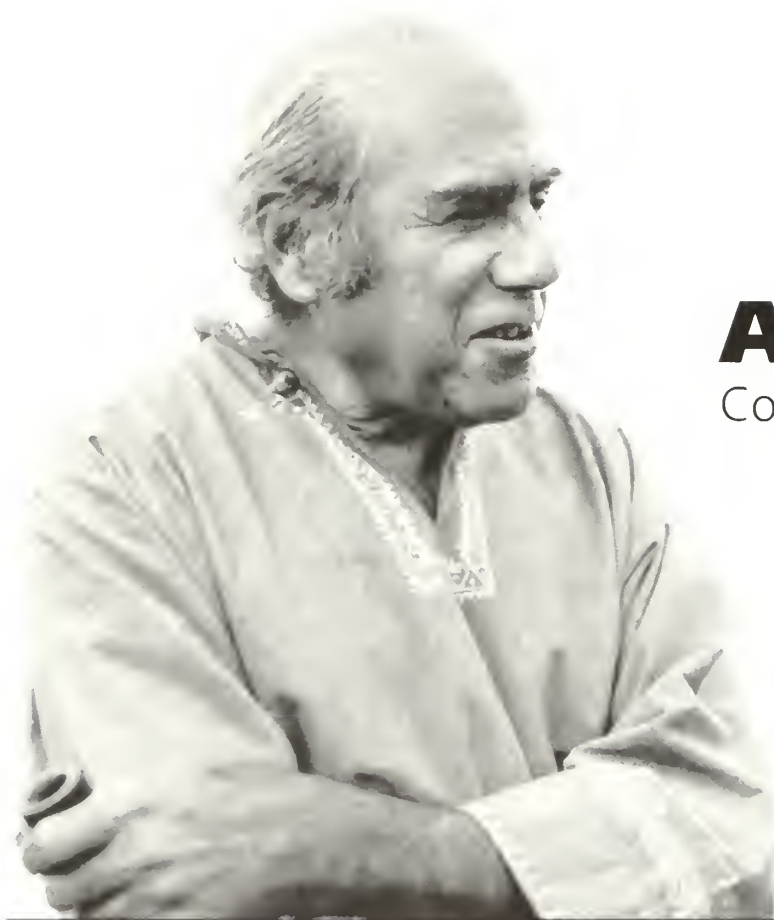
Maleness and emotional power are closely associated in *A Charmed Life* and in McCarthy's life. The male acts; the female reacts. Maleness is also associated with achievement. McCarthy claims to have come to that insight at 16, after her introduction to an avant-garde lesbian salon in Seattle, which she rejected: "My heart was set on men and boys. Sex and love and social conquest were inseparably wedded in my mind with men, even though the male organs were far from beautiful in my eyes." This passage from *How I Grew* is wonderful for its contradictory claims and its implications. It internalizes

Mailer's equation of power with maleness. But McCarthy's testimony shows that the relationship between gender and power is more complicated. It also shows us that McCarthy intended to manipulate the existing power structure. And she did—far more successfully than Martha Sinnott was able to do. Martha's fate reveals that sexual liberation does not equal psychological or occupational liberation.

McCarthy's allusion to Psyche and Pandora, the mythic female figures who gave knowledge to the human race, stands out in a novel that resists literary allusion. Psyche means "mind," as the many words that begin with her name remind us—psychology, psychoanalysis, etc. Pandora's disobedience opened the locked box of knowledge. Like Eve, she is both reviled and honored for her transgression. Martha's need to know—about the baby, about so much else—becomes an insatiable female need, one worthy of Psyche and Pandora's legacy. McCarthy never limited herself to fiction and criticism. She took on, among other subjects, the arts of Florence and Venice and the corruptions of the Vietnam War and Watergate. McCarthy's questing self also took her to a sustained encounter with the problematics of memory and its relation to truth. She early saw and defined the paradox that a work of fiction can be truer to autobiographical experience than a non-fiction memoir.

In *A Charmed Life*, as in her other fiction, McCarthy's strengths as a writer are not "novelistic;" she has, for example, no interest in character development or introspection. She must be thought of as a severe satirist. For her: "the best satire seems to spring from hatred and repugnance... I suspect it is usually written by powerless people; it is an act of revenge." *A Charmed Life* has been described as "a continuation of marriage to Edmund Wilson by other means." As such it is an act of revenge against Wilson and her own behavior, but hardly one exacted by a powerless person, for a writer's revenge has a unique transforming power. McCarthy has her protagonist pay the highest possible price—death—yet Martha's life demonstrates that pregnancy and playwriting can coexist, a historically unheard of combination. Martha has internalized sense and sensibility, reason and feeling. Knowledge and truth, not shallowness and deception, those historically female attributions, govern her decisions. The bed becomes a fit stage for philosophic discourse. McCarthy's ironies about the relationship between gender and power and the limitations of sexual liberation still irritate and illuminate.

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# Arthur Berger:

## Composer on the Cape

by David Kopp

ARTHUR BERGER, 1974 PHOTO RENATE PONSOLD

At 87, the composer Arthur Berger might be expected to savor his retirement. Instead, he can regularly be found at his laptop computer, working on his latest book, a collection of reminiscences on music from 1930 to the present "as he sees it." Berger's hands are not as nimble as they once were at the piano keyboard, and the writing process proceeds with some frustration. But Berger is determined to master the nuances of today's software and is discovering e-mail. The drafts of several chapters of his book are already on the hard drive, and he has successfully diagnosed a screen problem whose cause eluded the technical staff at his local computer dealer.

Arthur Berger was born in the Bronx in 1912 into a middle class family with casual musical interests. His early musical experience was of popular song and his sister's piano lessons, which on his own initiative he mastered along with her. By his teens he had begun composing music along classical models. Berger attended City College and New York University, where he first came into contact with modern European music and experimental American music by composers such as Charles Ives and Henry Cowell. He joined a group of young composers led by Aaron Copland, while his own music became influenced by the atonal style of Arnold Schoenberg. At about the same time Berger began writing criticism for the *New York Daily Mir-*

*ror*, a Hearst tabloid, until he was fired for covering Cowell's sparsely attended concerts of avant-garde music rather than the sellout concerts of mainstream works by established artists. Soon after, Berger ceased writing music for a time, in part because he felt unable to reconcile the expressionism and high-culture character of atonal Second Viennese School style with the leftist political ideology of the artistic milieu he inhabited. Berger has observed that during this time (and regrettably less so since then) musicians, visual artists, and writers lived in close association, sharing ideas and aspirations, and thus it was natural for him to assess his goals within this larger framework. Berger's later career remains a testament to those times. He has always maintained an active dual presence as composer and as writer on music, and has sustained close ties with visual artists, especially those associated with the Outer Cape.

In 1933 Berger moved from New York to study on fellowship at the Longy School of Music in Cambridge, MA. Since the Longy fellowship provided no living stipend, Berger found work writing criticism for the *Boston Transcript*, a sympathetic newspaper with a respectable Brahmin readership, as a way of supporting himself. From Longy he moved to graduate study at Harvard, where he formed a close and enduring friendship with Robert Motherwell, who had not yet decided whether to become a painter or an historian of art. Berger introduced Motherwell to modernist thought, and later suggested that

he seek out art historian Meyer Schapiro at Columbia, whose ideas were instrumental in further shaping Motherwell's aesthetic approach. While at Harvard Berger founded a new-music periodical, the *Musical Mercury*, which ran for three years. Berger's stay at Harvard led to a scholarship in Paris and two years' study with fabled pedagogue Nadia Boulanger. Like many of Boulanger's students, Berger did not study composition with her, but rather musical analysis. Chief among Boulanger's circle was Russian composer Igor Stravinsky, whose cool, witty, and rhythmic neoclassic style began to exert a strong influence on Berger. Upon returning to America in 1939, Berger took a teaching position at Mills College in California. Encouraged by the resident dance instructor, who always expected fresh music for her productions, and by his senior colleague, the prolific French composer Darius Milhaud, Berger began to compose again. For his new music he adopted a style drawing on the neoclassicism of Stravinsky and Americans such as Copland, himself a Boulanger protégé of a previous generation.

In 1943 Berger returned to New York for a three-year stint as music critic of the *New York Sun*, followed by seven years at the *Herald Tribune*, where he shared duties with storied critic Virgil Thomson. This was also a fertile period for composition; Berger wrote much of his important instrumental music during this time, including duos for various instruments with piano, chamber works, songs, and solo piano



music. Berger's neoclassic music from these years took on the tonal attributes typical of the style, in which familiar intervals and chords move and combine in unfamiliar ways, all energized by a lively rhythmic sense borrowing from jazz and popular music. At the same time his music retained some of its earlier sensibility: disjunct melodic structure and careful attention to register and timbre deriving more from Schoenberg and his disciple Anton von Webern. These features in combination defined the distinctive Berger quality. Thus in a period characterized by fierce compositional allegiance to either Schoenberg or Stravinsky, Berger the composer somewhat broke the mold by incorporating features of each. Berger the writer and thinker, though, clearly allied himself with the Stravinsky forces, publishing extensively on the Russian composer's music.

During the 1940s Berger participated regularly in the musical life of the Outer Cape as a frequent guest of Gardner Jencks, the avant-garde composer and socialite whose Pamet River estate in Truro often served as the locale for musical gatherings. These included numerous concerts given by Berger and Jencks of music for piano four-hands. Normally this music is played by two performers side-by-side on a single instrument. In these performances, however, each pianist had his own grand piano. This way, claims Berger, each had more room to maneuver.

Another Pamet River resident in the early '40s was the distinguished American composer Elliott Carter. Berger tells of a visit he and his first wife, Esther, made to Carter and his wife, Helen, that year. One day the group took a bus to Provincetown, where they bought lobsters to prepare for dinner. (It was wartime, and there were few cars.) Arriving back in Truro, Helen Carter remembered an invitation to the Jencks' for cocktails that evening, which they simply had to honor. When the group finally returned from the Jencks' they discovered that the lobsters had been forgotten and were no longer alive. A quandary ensued: to eat or not to eat. A concerned phone call to the Marine Laboratories at Woods Hole drew a stern warning to throw the lobsters away. Other calls to local residents were more encouraging, since the lobsters were so recently deceased. Ultimately the group decided to brave the risk. They cooked the lobsters, ate them, and survived, to the considerable benefit of American music in the 20th century. Despite this good omen, Elliott Carter decided not to return to the Cape, saying that the frequent sound of the wind too often disturbed his concentration while composing.

In 1953 Berger moved again to the Boston area to join the music department of Brandeis University. He continued to write music and criticism, publishing an influential monograph on Copland in the same year. In 1962 he co-founded the journal *Perspectives of New Music*, which since its inception has been the leading American forum on issues relating to composition of 20th-century music. Over the years he contributed many important articles to *Perspectives* and other

journals. As a composer, Berger moved with the times. By the mid '50s, the neoclassic style had been displaced worldwide by the ordered atonality of serialism modeled on Schoenberg's and Webern's practice. Given his earlier affinity, Berger made the transition readily, maintaining his strong personal style despite the music's change to a more dissonant surface. At first as a serial composer he followed the trend of precompositional determination, fully organizing the content of a piece through manipulation of the ordering of pitches, rhythms, etc., before actually writing the music itself. By the early '60s, though, he adopted a freer method, fixing certain aspects of the music beforehand and letting the rest flow from the pen in a process called psychic automatism, a kind of automatic writing associated with Surrealism, which Motherwell also employed in his work. Berger characterizes his musical style from this later period as "heterophony [the distribution of a single melody over many parts] punctuated by tall harmonic pillars." While Berger vigorously denies attempts to read overtly visual references into his music, a look at the score of his piano four-hand work, *Perspectives III*, originally written in 1969 for chamber orchestra, provides an illuminating visual image of the musical process Berger describes.

Following his move to Brandeis, Berger continued regular summer visits to Cape Cod. At first he lived in Provincetown, where he rented a studio from the painter Irving Marantz, first on his own (his first wife had passed away), and later with his second wife, Ellen. Berger notes that there was not much regular musical activity on the Outer Cape from the '50s onward, other than the concerts of the Provincetown Orchestra, conducted by Joseph Hawthorne, son of the painter, Charles. So why did Berger choose to spend so much time in an area relatively devoid of musicians? Exactly, he says: to be away from the swirl of professional music for part of the year, and to experience the different stimulation afforded by the Outer Cape's literary and visual arts community. By the early 1970s Arthur and Ellen Berger had built a modest, secluded cottage on the edge of conservation land close to Ryder Beach in South Truro, where they have summered ever since. The situation has proved congenial to Berger's creative impulse, for he has written much of his important later music in his Truro studio, including his highly regarded string quartet and most of his orchestral works.

Of course musical events of interest did occur from time to time on the Outer Cape. One notable concert took place at the Art Association in the summer of 1967. This was an evening of avant-garde music organized by the composer Jacob Druckman, summer resident and later director of the Yale School of Music. Performers included Berger on piano and the painter Larry Rivers on clarinet. One featured work on the program was a composition by the radical German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen, in which players were instructed to respond to different ideographs held up by the conductor by playing

chords associated with each. At the same time family pictures of the performers were projected onto their backs. During the performance Berger began increasingly to disregard the indicated cues, improvising his own music instead. He also slammed the lid of the piano down a few times for added effect. Looking back, he remembers the experience as "not my finest hour."

A true high point of Berger's long association with visual artists occurred two decades later, in the summer of 1987, when members of the Long Point Gallery in Provincetown mounted an exhibition on the occasion of his 75th birthday. All of the works in the show involved a musical subject, and many directly addressed Berger's music. Old chum Motherwell showed the first work in his series involving the letters of the alphabet: a collage on "AB" (Berger's initials) containing strips of Berger's own composing manuscript. Leo Manso, another close friend, contributed works, as did Paul Resika, Sidney Simon, Judith Rothschild, Budd Hopkins, and Varujan Boghosian. The event also featured a concert of Berger songs written in 1940 on poems by Yeats, performed by a group including the soprano Blair Resika and Berger's good friend Bernard Greenhouse, celebrated cellist of the Beaux Arts Trio and longtime Wellfleet resident.

Berger's most recent musical innovation draws once again on his broad artistic outlook. In the early 1990s he developed a compositional method modeled after Motherwell's collage technique, in which an old print was used as background. Taking bits of his earlier pieces and composing fresh music "over" them, Berger created completely new works. Whereas the old is visible behind the new in Motherwell's collages, Berger intends that the two should be indistinguishable in his collage music.

These days, Berger's music is still heard often in concert on the Cape and throughout the country. A recording of his complete music for piano four-hands has just been issued, and another of the complete music for solo piano is in the works. Ellen, retired as a child psychologist, pursues her own work as a visual artist, with recent shows in Truro, Provincetown, and Cambridge. The Truro cottage, expanded a few years back to include adjoining studios for each, is now home for several months of the year. Arthur Berger, significant member of the unique artistic scene of the Outer Cape for nearly 60 years, with a book contract to fulfill, is still going strong.

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*Picasso from Michael & Holly Rosenberg  
Picasso*

## Something to Paint

by Ivy Meeropol

When I was maybe 10 or 11, I brought a schoolmate home with me, a girl I wanted to impress. I steered her clear of our still black and white t.v. and led her to a simple drawing that hung unobtrusively among macramé plant holders and solidarity posters in the living room. "It's a Picasso", I told her meaningfully. She gave me a blank look. "But who are they?" she wanted to know. Two faces, made of a few lines and scribbles, floated sad and resigned in their frame. "My grandparents," I told her, trying out the taste of each syllable, "they were my grandparents."

Picasso's drawing, from 1952, is a double portrait of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, who were executed on the day before their 14th wedding anniversary in 1953 for conspiracy to commit espionage. It was said they stole the secret to the atom bomb, passed it like a baton to the Russians, led us to war with Korea and, as Judge Irving Kaufman said upon sentencing them to death, "undoubtedly altered the course of history to the disadvantage of our country." In my house and many others, another story was told: they were heroes who defied our red-baiting government and refused to lie and name names. They preferred to die for freedom rather than cave.

Still, to a majority of Americans they remain the "Atom Spies." Their towering photograph stood for years in the foyer of the FBI Building in Washington, DC, under the rubric "Crime of the Century." I used to imagine endless parades of schoolchildren marching past that picture on their way to the fingerprinting lab. "Look children, real-life monsters." All the scarier because they look so plain, just a husband and wife, an engineer and a mother. I grew up terrified and in awe of what happened to the Rosenbergs. I understood, at a very young age, that the electric chair must hurt, burn so badly that in Ethel's case, excited reporters described in detail the smoke rising from her head. All of these images converged on our house in the woods, where my brother and I lived happily with our parents and the Picasso. The drawing became a soothing sight for me, easier to take than the photographs of them shackled and twisting to line up their lips for a kiss.

As the Rosenbergs languished in jail for three years, not only Picasso but renowned artists around the world painted this ordinary couple plucked from their apartment on the Lower East Side. Although the Rosenbergs became a popular subject—the fruit bowls and seascapes of the Left—aside from an excellent 1988 traveling exhibit and catalog documenting the Rosenberg Era Art Project, these works have received little attention. Fear and hatred of Communism, along with a fixation on formalism, created a void that erased these works from the history of mid-cen-

tury art. Fifties formalism represented a kind of freedom of expression that even cold warriors could embrace. As critic Michael Brenson writes of the Abstract Expressionists: "in order to gain a kind of respect for the artist in America, they had to make sure the artist was disassociated from Communism...The image they cultivated—of the hard-drinking, non-verbal, apolitical male—was one with which postwar America could feel at ease." Bob Dylan, in the still unreleased "Julius and Ethel," sings, "Eisenhower was President/Senator Joe was King/Long as you didn't say nothin'/you could say anything." The artists who depicted the Rosenbergs spoke loud and clear at a time when this stance was both unfashionable and dangerous.

Despite it all, the list of artists who painted the Rosenbergs is long—Alice Neel, Karel Appel, Rudolph Baranik, Rockwell Kent, Fernand Léger, and many others. What compelled them? This is American social realist Ben Shahn's response to another political execution, that of the Italian-American anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927: "Ever since I could remember I'd wished that I'd been lucky enough to be alive at a great time—when something big was going on, like the Crucifixion. And suddenly I realized that it was. I was living through another crucifixion. Here was something to paint!" Shahn had found his subject; one of his many Sacco and Vanzetti canvases now hangs in the permanent collection galleries at the Museum of Modern Art. Two decades later, the Rosenbergs became another crucifixion—a



story so terrible and true that artists, often the consciousness of our culture, had to paint it.

In Western Europe and Mexico, Rosenberg art had a galvanizing effect. By June of 1953, when death for the Rosenbergs seemed imminent, Parisians held mass protests, chanting "Eisenhower Assassin." Posters by Louis Mittelberg (chief cartoonist for *L'Humanité*), of Eisenhower's huge grinning head, each tooth an electric chair, were pasted all over the city. Tens of thousands of French people protested on the day the Rosenbergs were executed. Walter and Miriam Schneir, authors of *Invitation to an Inquest*, one of the most comprehensive histories of the Rosenberg case, report that in France, "the campaign to save the doomed couple produced an astonishing unanimity among all factions of that nation's polychrome political spectrum. The Rosenberg case was in fact the single issue about which disputatious French citizens had been able to unite since the war."

A drawing by Renato Guttuso, a prominent Italian social realist, was reproduced on thousands of pamphlets. Guttuso's drawing depicts the couple in handcuffs, embracing, with pleading looks, and behind them, a bloodied map of North America. In Mexico City, where there hadn't been much word of the Rosenberg trial, Francisco Mora's *Help Stop This Crime* was posted everywhere. Within days Mexicans organized to protest the execution. Mora said, "I think that an artist conscious of himself as an artist is an artist conscious for the whole world. My idea was in some way to help the defense of the Rosenbergs, to avoid the assassinations." Picasso and Léger sold their Rosenberg lithographs to raise money for the defense. Their images, often more powerful than words, inspired masses of people in countries other than our own, to march for clemency. These artists sought to literally save the Rosenbergs' lives with their art. And while they did not, in the end, succeed, they proved that art can be an effective rallying cry.

Here in the U.S., depicting the Rosenbergs was far more perilous work. Hugo Gellert, an illustrator for the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker* and the *Daily Worker*, organized fundraising auctions for the defense committee. He said that artists who created art before the Rosenbergs' death were an important part of the struggle. Those who did so afterward were recording history—"It's not that it isn't valuable, it's just not the same. Too many artists were afraid to be counted." Ralph Fasanella, an American painter and union organizer remembered, "It was a terrible time. We had almost no friends in that period. We were so isolated and demoralized and separated." As recently as 1970, Fasanella told an interviewer he was still afraid that his Rosenberg paintings might be destroyed one day because their message would be intolerable. "The Rosenbergs weren't killed for anything they did—they were killed for their ideas. That's why I put books all around them. I put them in that chair so they'd have something beautiful. You can't just throw them in a goddam box and forget them. I can't forget them. I don't mean to make them heroes. I think they handled the thing

wrong in many ways. But you can't forget what they meant and what happened to them."

The contemporary artist Sue Coe, whose work is inextricably linked to her politics, wants to rescue the Rosenbergs from the Right, which, she believes, "reanimates their corpses time and again to justify red-baiting." Given the brutal, explicit nature of her work, I asked Coe if she has nightmares about the Rosenbergs. "No, I do not have nightmares about the Rosenbergs. I have nightmares that nobody will be left to speak up against the State. I know what the State is capable of."

The relationship between art and politics is as troubled now as it was then and Coe herself is no stranger to attacks from those who believe in the mutual exclusivity of political content and artistic merit. Picasso was ridiculed by many in the art world when, in 1944, he joined the Communist Party. He felt compelled to explain himself and issued a lengthy statement; "My adhesion to the Communist Party is the logical outcome of my whole life. For I am glad to say that I have never considered painting simply as a pleasure...I have wanted by drawing and colour, since those were my weapons, to penetrate always further forward in the consciousness of the world and of men so that this understanding may liberate us further each day." First appearing on posters he designed for the Communist Party's International Peace Congress, Picasso's rendition of a white pigeon became a universally recognized symbol for peace. As I looked for evidence of Picasso's involvement in the Rosenberg case, I went deep into the countless pages documenting his life and work. I found not a word, no record of a political discussion, or passing comment to a friend. If it weren't for his art, it would be as if Picasso had said nothing about the Rosenbergs.

Something made the Rosenbergs pursue an even higher ideal than their own lives. For intangible freedoms—of thought, speech, and politics—they gave their tangible bodies. One night, after reading a letter Ethel wrote to Julius while they were both in prison ("So long, so dreadfully long since I've seen you my sweet; I have been weeping the usual bucket of week-end tears."), I looked closely at the Picasso, the only likeness of them on our walls. I studied the thin mustache above Julius' lip and the roundness of Ethel's face. I was frustrated that even though they were my grandparents, for all the cozy connotations that label brings to mind, they could only exist in images for me, the same images available to the world. But the longer I looked the more I realized that somehow, the Picasso, my image, helped make it alright. Like his pigeon, which became a dove, Picasso rescued the Rosenbergs, making them a symbol of something good and heroic; not monstrous and evil. His drawing illuminates them; his master thumb places my grandparents among the angels and the saints.

*Ivy Meeropol is a writer and the fiction editor of Provincetown Arts. She lives in Brooklyn and North Truro.*

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BOB THOMPSON, *HOMAGE TO NINA SIMONE*, 1965

## Signifying **Bob Thompson**

by Frances Richard

A painter, by definition, dedicates his or her creative energies to an unresolvable tension and ongoing dialogue: that between surface and depth. Color and line move in and out, leap back or surge forward in space; they may describe perspective or seduce the eye to volume, but the canvas stays flat and a painter, by definition, has to love that. For the brief nine years of his career, from 1958 to his death in 1966, Bob Thompson made paintings one might describe as double-voiced, each encapsulating a conversation between introvert and extrovert tendencies. The deep play of Thompson's surfaces engages further layers of contradiction—between form and content, evasion and expression, urgency and sublimity. The forces guiding his work travel under many names but ultimately what characterizes his art is its insistence on a third position, a precarious balance between seemingly polar opposites.

Thompson was a figurative painter steeped in the language of abstraction, an African-American bohemian whose most consistent thematic touchstone was the canon of Renaissance art history, a visual artist whose aesthetic is often explicated in terms borrowed from the jazz idiom. A sometime junkie dead at age 29, he has inevitably been cast in the role of tragic (black) artist—the Jean-Michel Basquiat of the Beats. And, given the cultural, social, and aes-

thetic ruptures that split the late '60s from the early '60s, Thompson in some sense seems frozen in time, everlastingly concerned with Piero della Francesca and Nicolas Poussin while his contemporaries matured with the Black Arts movement, pan-Africanism, Black Power. Still, his art continues to be exhibited and to attract critical attention, most recently with a full-scale retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art last fall.

Addressing some of the difficulty in pigeonholing her subject, Whitney curator Thelma Golden writes in her catalog introduction, "Appropriation now often implies a critique which was not a part of Thompson's project. And there are many in the field who belittle Thompson as simply a copyist. And still others say that these adaptations of Western art were an assimilationist tactic...Thompson understood the power of the works he used and their place in the history of art. Western art offered him something which he assumed was his right to use freely. He also was clear about his desire to make these works his own: inflect their vocabulary with his grammar; infuse the agreed-upon meanings with his intention. To claim them. To signify."

To signify means to make meaning; in the African-American vernacular it means to make meaning in a particular way, to lay claim to the present through a conscious appropriation of the past constructed through revision, repetition,

critique, and homage. The cultural critic Henry Louis Gates, Jr., in *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*, suggests that the two versions of the word are interwoven, and that the task of the black artist in America has always been to navigate—with as much grace, wit, and verve as possible—this subtle double-helix of signification.

For Thompson, to signify upon the history of painting meant to insert his gesturing hand into its guts, to seize upon the compositions of the Old Masters and bend them to his idiosyncratic and contemporary will. With the idea of the double-voiced utterance, the seeming divide between post-be-bop jazz and canonical art history is bridged—Thompson used one tradition to signify upon the other, modulating the study of his own art form through strategies borrowed from another that he loved. This is not to say Thompson made "jazzy" paintings, or to recklessly apply a simplistic (and ultimately parasitic) definition of the complex and highly-structured aural art that is jazz improvisation. Rather it is to understand that the eminent corpus of Western art gave Thompson a text and context against and within which to articulate himself.

Gates defines literary signifying by quoting Ralph Ellison, who muses about jazz and compares it to painting; in doing so, Gates might be acknowledging the spirit of cross-pollination in the arts that Thompson enjoyed in places like Provincetown. According to Ellison, "There is a



cruel contradiction implicit in the art form itself, for true jazz is an art of individual assertion within and against the group. Each true jazz moment (as distinct from the uninspired commercial performance) springs from a contest in which each artist challenges all the rest, each solo flight, or improvisation, represents (like the successive canvases of a painter) a definition of his identity, as individual, as member of the collectivity and as link in the chain of tradition. Thus, because jazz finds its very life in an endless improvisation upon traditional materials, the jazzman must lose his identity even as he finds it."

Bob Thompson began his search for identity in the art world at an interesting time and place. When he arrived in Provincetown in the summer of 1958, a precocious art student from Louisville, Kentucky, Abstract Expressionism was de rigueur, and as his wife, Carol, says, there were "maybe two or three" other black people in town, a fact that "didn't seem to bother Bob." He was talented and ambitious and had introductions from his Louisville teachers to several established members of the colony. Like every young hipster drawn to the place, Thompson was eager for contact with the vital arts community. This group ranged from the godfathers of Ab Ex—Franz Kline, Robert Motherwell, Hans Hoffman—to younger artists experimenting with a new kind of figuration—Gandy Brodie, Jan Müller, Tony Vevers, Red Grooms, Mimi Gross, Emilio Cruz, Jay Milder, and Christopher Lane, among others. He was successful from the beginning, exhibiting 13 paintings at the Provincetown Art Festival in 1958; the collector Walter P. Chrysler bought all of them. The influential Sun Gallery began to show his work. "Provincetown was a gateway," according to Emilio Cruz. "We were all part of a tribe."

Influenced by the milieu on the Cape, Thompson's style began to evolve toward the figure, though he never abandoned the emotive color and sinuous lyricism his Ab Ex training had established. In works like *Black Monster* and *Untitled* (both 1959) Thompson's brooding, circuitous approach to narrative begins to emerge. With its snarling black beast grasping at two naked white women, *Black Monster* deals overtly with interracial sexuality, and—in the black-hatted figure between the two women—establishes a visual trope that recurs throughout Thompson's oeuvre. Marker of "cool," marker of "badness," a disguise and an attention-getter, the black hat functions as a cipher for the painter's self. Remarkably similar to the black-hatted figures populating the work of outsider artist Bill Traylor—which Thompson could not have known—the totemic black-hatted men suggest the loneliness of the observer, an entity who paradoxically becomes a focal point for each scene in which he appears. In *Untitled*, the black-hatted silhouette doubles into two figures, shadow and self or brother and comrade, whose abstracted bodies merge with the bare trees. The aloof commentator is always present, even in the painter's most expressionistic moments.

In New York City in the months between Provincetown summers, Thompson belonged to the downtown Beat scene. He was painting at a feverish pace, in an illegal cold-water loft on the Lower East Side. Allan Kaprow's Happenings were happening, and Thompson was there, drawing and playing the drums. Like everyone else, he spent a lot of time in jazz clubs, especially the Five Spot, across the street from LeRoi and Hettie Jones' house on the Bowery. His friends Jackie McLean and Ornette Coleman would come to hang out in his studio, and it was at this point that Thompson made *The Garden of Music* (1960), one of his most important early works. A group portrait of jazz greats including Coleman, John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, and bassist Charlie Haden, *The Garden of Music* places the musicians in a polychromatic Eden of their own making. The schematized landscape undulates backward, reds and oranges vying with grass-green, while stark black trees create a vertical counterpoint with the standing nude figures. The black-hatted man stands in the lower right corner. The composition is loud but harmonious, hectic without being disorderly, the faces hovering between portraiture and abstraction. According to Bill Barrell, director of the Sun Gallery in the early '60s, in this period Thompson was interested in "achieving the same rhythmic energy in painting that jazz did in music, and how mood could be created through the use of certain shapes, forms, and colors. He would try to match colors to the sounds of the different instruments."

In 1961, Bob and Carol Thompson left for Europe on the *Queen Elizabeth*, armed with a \$3,000 grant from the John Hay Whitney Foundation. The couple spent two years in Paris and on the island of Ibiza. Thompson haunted the museums, absorbing Masaccio, Goya, the Fauves. Back home in 1963, he began to show in New York, with Paula Cooper (then Paula Johnson) and Martha Jackson; there were also shows in Chicago and at Yale. Perhaps the success was too much for him, or maybe he simply missed Europe; in any case the pair went abroad again in 1965. Thompson died in Rome in May, 1966, apparently of an overdose.

As the Whitney show made plain, Thompson's greatest talent was for color. Even in late works like *Satyr and Maiden* (1965), which originated in direct response to European models, Thompson's exuberant palette dominates the



quasi-classical scenes. The weird and beautiful *Homage to Nina Simone* (1965), for example, signifies overtly upon Poussin's *Bacchus with a Guitarist* (ca.1630). In a double displacement, Thompson shifts attention from Poussin's central Bacchus onto the snaky, dark-pink woman with the beehive hairdo far off to the left, whom the viewer supposes must be Ms. Simone. Then, through color, the painter re-invents the supremely orderly landscape of Poussin's Arcadia, making it sing with cadmium reds, deep yellows and blues. If Cezanne is said to have "redone Poussin after nature," Thompson redid Poussin after Ornette.

Inserted into the rigorously constructed, highly rational spaces he borrowed from the tradition, Thompson's personal pantheon of symbols—monsters, birds, trees, the black-hatted man, and the female nude—evinces a kind of wildly cheerful angst, an atmosphere of *luxue* and *vohupté*, but rarely *calme*. Art critic Meyer Schapiro comments that Thompson "gave to his strange images a rhapsodical hotness," and in his tightly interlocked surfaces, Thompson staked out an investigation of composition as expression, a synthesis of form and feeling in which, ultimately, the explicit content becomes less than central. As Gates explains: "In this sort of revision, again where meaning is fixed, it is the realignment of the signifier that is the signal trait of expressive genius. The more mundane the fixed text ('April in Paris' by Charlie Parker, 'My Favorite Things' by John Coltrane), the more dramatic is the Signifyin(g) revision. It is this principle of repetition and difference, this practice of intertextuality, which has been so crucial to the black vernacular forms of Signifyin(g)."

The time may at last be right for a re-consideration of Thompson's brief and blazing take on the painter's strange task of representing existence in two dimensions plus pigment. In a possible pantheon of African American painters, he stands as something of a hinge between venerable modernists like Beauford Delaney and Romare Bearden and younger artists like Kerry James Marshall and Robert Colescott. The concept of signifying is also illuminating when applied, for example, to Ellen Gallagher's use of the language of minimalism. But, of course, Thompson is and was an artist in a community of artists, not an entry in a constructed "black" art history. As Gates points out, the act of signifying is ultimately an act of self-discovery. Writer Hettie Jones comments, "I always felt that what he was painting was us, our world. The colors he used were those of the new world that was coming. Everybody was a different color and that was the way it was going to be."

Frances Richard is a poet and critic who lives in Brooklyn. She is the non-fiction editor of FENCE magazine.

BOB THOMPSON, FOREGROUND, IBIZA, 1962



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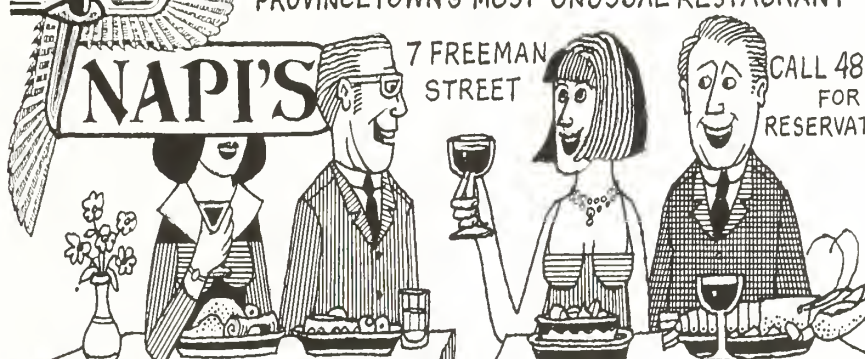
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# What Is an Artist?

by Hans Hofmann

Following is the text of Hans Hofmann's statement, presented on the first evening of Forum 49, July 3, 1949, at 200 Commercial Street.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I consider it part of my artistic responsibility to help, support and encourage all that is young, vital, progressive, and honest. This is the reason why I am part of this Forum.

I feel that Provincetown as an art center must revive its tradition created by some powerful artists in the past. Traditions must be kept alive—traditions must not end in self-contentment. This is another reason why this Forum came into existence.

All great things came into existence through struggle and fight. All that is alive is alive through continued struggle and fight. We—the elder—are the Fathers of the youths—but it is the youth in demanding a rightful place among us that keeps us young and alive. This Forum came into existence to give the youth this place.

Let us not forget the tragic past of the cultural pioneers of modern art in America. They have been badly neglected, misunderstood, ridiculed and maliciously persecuted either as charlatans or as fools or as communists to the extent of a final personal catastrophe to the artist for many of them, and to a near cultural catastrophe for this country.

In the future this shall never happen again. It shall not happen to the younger generation of this country, whom I know to be so well equipped with great promise for the future.

What is an artist is the theme of the evening.

Well, I don't know what an artist is—but I do know what makes an artist. I do know that only the man equipped with creative instincts and a searching mind is destined to become an artist. As an artist I do know that only the highest exaltation of the soul will enable the artist to transform the deepest and weightiest of his experiences into a new dimension of the spirit that is art.

Creation is a mystery, and so is the artist in the act of creation.

Every great work is a new reality—but it is the life's work of an artist that creates a new dimension of the spirit. The life's work of an artist is "the work of art." It includes the whole behavior of the man, his ethical standards, and his awareness of his creative responsibilities.

Talent is everywhere—it does not make the artist. It is often a handicap because it invites

cleverness, which always chooses the easier side of life.

Andre Malraux says: "Only sensitivity achieves creativeness." I feel inclined to expand this by saying: "Only conscious sensitivity achieves great art."

Quality must be conquered. And I mean by quality that which carries a message; in painting this must be a plastic message.

I said: quality must be conquered. It asks for struggle—it often means despair—it asks for character.

I do not believe that any political or religious standing has anything to do with art, either directly or indirectly. Any ideology that has dominated the human mind in the past has always produced good and bad art. Only Quality, in the sense I have here defined it, conveys and convinces. In any other way it is just not Quality.

A society's vital beliefs will certainly leave its mark on the artist. This mark will be deeply imbedded in his art—not in the sense of propaganda, but in the sense of his awareness of his *cultural mission*.

Modern art is exactly the opposite of what it lately has been officially accused of. Modern art is the symbol of our democracy. It is the privilege of a democracy like ours to expect the artist, through his art, to be the personification of its fundamental principle by giving the highest example of spiritual freedom in the performance of "*unconditioned, unrestricted creativeness*."

Ideas must be steadily reborn. Unconditioned creativeness is its prerequisite.

Our Constitution is a great work of art; it must not be destroyed by mediocrity. Let the youth of America speak. Let a free press and a creative critic speak. Long live the arts and the artist in a free future.

*This text is reprinted courtesy of the Hans Hofmann Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution and Ameringer/Howard Fine Arts, New York.*

HANS HOFMANN AT HOME IN PROVINCETOWN, 1948  
PHOTO: © BILL WITT

what is an artist?





# Protean Himself: An Interview with Robert Jay Lifton

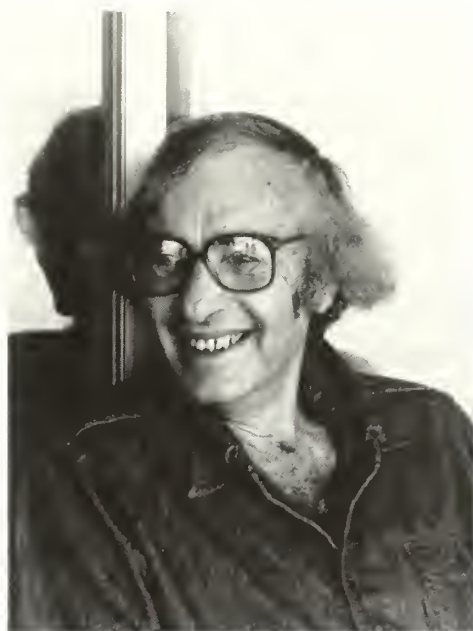
by Christopher Busa

*Robert Jay Lifton and his wife, Betty Jean, began summering on the Cape in 1957. A few years later they bought a house in Wellfleet with an unspoiled ocean view surrounded by acres of woods and fronted by a pristine beach. Lifton had large oak tables built into his study in anticipation of informal conferences, which began to take place every fall. Erik Erikson, Lifton's mentor, attended for 30 years. Erikson, Lifton said, was the only sane Freudian he had ever known. He guided Lifton out of the ivory tower of psychotherapy and into the bunker of history. Lifton made his own mark as the author of books on extreme events and human transformation, including Chinese thought reform, the Holocaust, and Vietnam.*

*The dialogue between Lifton and Erikson centered around Erikson's groundbreaking identity theory. Erikson's concept of identity is quite different from the Freudian ego, which is seen as having been created in full during childhood. Erikson postulated that one's very essence is fluid and allows for the self to stay integrated even as it changes. Both Lifton and Erikson struggled to formulate how one lives with one's own shifting self. For answers, Lifton turned to the poets and philosophers who were the subjects of literary critics and was astonished that a literary figure like Lionel Trilling could write about Freud's anchoring in biology as a source of stability for the self. Lifton's book, *The Protean Self: Human Resilience in an Age of Fragmentation*, published in 1993, has become the most hopeful vision of the creative potential of people living in the second millennium.*

**CHRISTOPHER BUSA:** Keats felt the essential characteristic of the poet was the ability to exist as a consciousness that itself had no self, but flowed into the selves of others through the power of sympathy. Such a person can breathe in an atmosphere that others would find choked and clouded with doubts, uncertainties, and fears. Keats called this Negative Capability, and it seems to me an early definition of proteanism.

**ROBERT JAY LIFTON:** It is close, especially as you describe it. Proteanism is the very discomfort with ambiguity, which creates wildly reactive moments. Broadly speaking, the graver dangers of the world have to do with violence against open ambiguity. In that sense, what Keats called Negative Capability is similar to the idea of proteanism. My view is one of degree. In this century, particularly the last half of the century, proteanism has blossomed with an emphasis unique to our time. But, historically, from the time we emerged as *Homo sapiens*, we have been protean in the way we have evolved symbolization as a psychobiological characteristic.



ROBERT JAY LIFTON, 1977 PHOTO RENATE PONSOLD

**CB:** When you say symbolization, you mean that humans experience the world through the mediation of their minds, which symbolizes what it sees before the sight becomes intelligible to the seer?

**RJL:** The mind is a medium; it is also a lever. There's action. No adult human being can perceive anything without recreating it. You need images to perceive it, and you have to recreate it as you perceive it. That's the nature of gray matter. It's as much biological as it is psychological and literary. That being so, every single perception is in motion, continuously, and that's the basis for proteanism. Any artist will evoke a version of proteanism in his or her century. In the Renaissance, you get a great flow of it, but mainly among the elite. In the late 20th century, we are all trying to stay afloat.

**CB:** The word "floating" occurs a lot in your writings. The random bobbing of the protean personality, like a buoy without a tether, results in the same kind of seasickness that Freud described as the "free-floating" condition of anxiety—a condition defined precisely by its powerful yet vague symptoms of unease, indefiniteness, and lack of willful direction. In your book the central problem faced by the protean person lay in the relation of self to community. When I think of the so-called Art World, I think of a floating community, which does not necessarily have a geographical locus. Instead, as in Swift's "Mechanical Operation of the Spirit," it is as if a fourth method of spiritual transformation has superseded the traditional three: prophecy, possession, and strong emotion. We believe in a place with no actual location, but symbolic locations—a few blocks in New York City, an art colony like Provincetown, a few neighborhoods in Paris. It's like a small town, but the inhabitants are often elsewhere, spread out spiritually beyond a shared physical locus.

**RJL:** You've given a definition, really, of protean experiments in community. We have joked about

my conservative side. In one sense, proteanism is a very conservative concept. It is a rescue operation for the self. It's almost impossible for the self to stay viable in our time, without being in some measure protean. There are alternatives: one could become part of a machine, technicized. Or become highly fundamentalist. But to be protean is to preserve the self against these alternatives.

**CB:** By adapting?

**RJL:** By adapting. In the sense that we've defined community, there is none now. Some places in Europe or Asia may have versions of it; in America it may be a battle we are losing. The protean way of connecting with elements of community, scattered in contradictory and non-geographical ways, is how we must manage.

**CB:** The world of so-called culture is a socially created world that transcends time. It is a realm of competing fictive spirits, persisting in communion with the great thinkers of the past, as if in a room with you, talking with you about some topic you care about and setting the standard for discourse. Especially if you have absorbed their books with the diligence of an acolyte, you may feel you know the great person's spirit as well as the great person knew his ordinary self. Inevitably, you begin to feel: this is a spiritual world. That world of culture is replacing religion. Religion, I agree with Freud, is an illusion. Art says frankly, "This is an illusion." Religion says, "Believe: this horseshit is real!"

**RJL:** I've been thinking about what I call the civilization of immortality. It is a broadly structuring idea that ebbs and flows. In art one can feel a vivid connection with ancient figures. Being part of some larger human connectedness is part of the human condition. Once we become cultural animals, we inevitably become something larger, we extend beyond our own limited life span. I don't know whether culture replaces religion in this sense. They are both versions of larger human connectedness, the civilization of immortality. Perhaps for the arts, culture replaces religion.

**CB:** It's the only way I can accept the historical role of the human imagination. God didn't create us; God was created by us. Man created God to have a way of grasping the self. The voices of authority become resonant as they recede. They echo and are amplified. Eventually they become sacred speeches that we discover we have preserved.

**RJL:** I feel that. Once you look at a human-centered psychology, whatever your relationship to religion, you're likely to view God as a human creation. And I think some people we consider deeply religious would be comfortable with that idea. Not dogmatically religious, but experientially so when one possesses the felt idea of God dwelling in human beings. Maybe what happens over time is that God and man become less sepa-



...and become part of what we consider the

I read an astonishing book last year called *God: A Biography* by Jack Miles, really a psychobiography of God. If the Bible is a compendium of events, statements of desire, lists of taxes due, then God Himself, the main protagonist of the Bible, must be said to have evolved through the experiences He occasioned. Here, in 1999, poised to shift a thousand years on the turn of a second, our focus on Mailer is pertinent, especially with his view of God—that He is not all-powerful. God, in Mailer's mind, has moments of weakness. Mailer says that the Holocaust was God's Vietnam. God may do the best He can; but He can fail.

**RJL:** Mailer wants to insist upon some entity that he can call God. He wants an imaginative view of God, but also traditional. He can talk about God in a way that many of his friends, fellow intellectuals, writers, and artists, wouldn't be comfortable doing. We all need energy sources outside of ourselves. It's simplistic to think we grow up with a father and a mother and they help us to become whatever it is we become. Out in the world, the experience is much more complex. When I did my first study, on Chinese thought reform, I pondered Camus, who wrote about historical revolutions in a style that spoke to me. I never met him, never knew him, but I felt we shared the same room. Man is a symbolizing creature. We can be in touch with creatures far away. Without symbolizing, you can't; it's that simple.

**CB:** So symbolism is a mode of connection?

**RJL:** It's a mode of connection, which is always an urge, energy. Freud thought of psychic energy as virtually physical: libido. And this was challenged. Word derivations of energy are related to synergy or liturgy, so it has spiritual origins that, unfortunately, have been taken over by mechanistic operations. In many New Age groups that I'm studying, energy is a mystical idea that only certain practices give to you, such as fasting or sleeping only four hours a day.

**CB:** A person who is not an artist may look at the production of an artist and say, "I could do that." The person could do that, if he or she had the energy. But the artist wanted to do it. That difference is the motivation of the artist, the desire to make a work in the first place.

**RJL:** When I first met Erik Erikson in 1956, he was just about to go off to Mexico to write *Young Man Luther*. He came back a year later with his wife, Joan. He had practically written the book. I said to Joan that it was amazing he had done so much work in one year. She said, "He really wanted to do it." That answer taught me a lot.

**CB:** Motivation is a chameleon word with as many shapes as your god, Proteus. It is like the water that changes from waves to ice to clouds. Artists will set up elaborate, crazy configurations

in their lives in order to keep the edge that makes them want to do the work. I was talking to a friend, a writer who loves gambling. I mentioned that Dostoyevsky put himself under daily pressure to produce words for serial publication, in order to pay his gambling debts. The artist contrives to have no choice. The artist does not say, "If I can't write this book, I'll be happy raising chickens." He is obliged to do one thing.

**RJL:** Obligation is connected with desire and it is also connected with what one is and what one can do. People ask me, "How can you do all those depressing studies, one more horrible than another?" Over time I evolved a way that feels right to me. I feel myself in them; that makes it possible for me to do them, quite beyond, or including, their horror. That came over time in a series of steps; that's the evolution of self, which allows one to look at the self, not only as a container of the person, but also a source of motivating energy.

**CB:** I'm interested in the role of the medium for the artist, how the medium can provide the artist with a relationship that is as rich as one with a human being—"intense, immediate, direct, subtle, unified, warm, vivid, rhythmic," in the words of Robert Motherwell, which you quoted in *The Protean Self*.

**RJL:** When you say medium, everything can bounce off of it. It becomes a beginning of the artist's symbolization of his feeling and idea about the world. From that product, all sorts of associations take shape. Motherwell was especially interesting. I knew him well enough to have had a number of good conversations with him. Whenever we'd meet, at an opening, say, we'd go in a corner and talk, about just these issues. The extraordinary array of concepts and words of this man, who painted things so essentially, struck anybody who knew him. He had to paint and he took great delight in talking about everything that went into painting. He looked back on his early days with the European surrealists and he wanted to see large images and symbols as going into that essence he made. He was enormously aware of social change, society, differences in being a painter or writer in different centuries, had a very social and historical imagination. I just came from the Pollock retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, loved it, so I am full of Pollock. One thinks of Pollock, in a very American way, sweeping away history and society—that's one myth. But with Motherwell there is no sweeping away, and there remained a tension between his essence and his civilizing mind.

**CB:** Motherwell can be raw and elegant, at once brutal and highly refined. Is the symbolizing function an artistic function, or is it a human function?

**RJL:** It's a human function. It's the only form of mentation available to human beings beyond the age of six or so. We don't know how to exist

without it; it's psychobiological, as elemental as thirst or hunger.

**CB:** I used to want to believe that the artist entered some extraordinary state, a creative trance, but my father, an artist, showed me that making art was a natural function, like getting up from a sofa and taking a walk. A painting was the product of a series of accumulated actions and decisions.

**RJL:** In parallel ways, I learned those lessons from Erickson, and Mailer's another good example of what Erickson called the "work habit." The work habit is inseparable from motivation. It is that systematic, methodical struggle and it builds on itself all the time. Erickson was a complicated man who did some things that were difficult for a lot of people, but he was, in my view, authentic in his work habit, fully dedicated. Mailer's the same way. When I met Mailer he was in a much wilder phase, the late '50s.

**CB:** That was the heyday of his wildness.

**RJL:** I'd go to his home and he'd have various groups there. He'd drink heavily. But he seemed always to be at his desk the next morning, maybe an hour later. He never stopped writing. That work habit is the meeting ground between imagination and religion, or between culture and religion. It's sacred to the artist or serious writer.

**CB:** The poet Mary Oliver has a rule about "making appointments" with herself to write. She knows she'll be at her desk after her morning walk, and she even hides pencils in the trees for future use. Her days get planned and organized and even her dreams get wrapped up in this activity of writing poetry.

**RJL:** With the work habit, everything happens at once. It is an expression, certainly, of motivation. You carve out those hours in the day regularly, because you need that time to do what you want to do. Like in a religious ritual, methodical with hard detail, one is constantly thinking out things. A lot flows underneath. But you need the structure to allow the inner freedom and unconscious associations. I see a parallel to what you describe in an artist to academic life. People say, I really want to write but I'm stuck with all this administrative work. The truth is, if you really want to write, you write. You get up at four in the morning, or you avoid something in the afternoon. You just do it. Making those appointments is both a discipline and a necessity.

**CB:** If symbolization is a human function that lies at the heart of artistic creation, then can't we say each person contains a touch of the artist? For example, your own work may not be possible without an artistic core.

**RJL:** Start with the commonalities. I'm not an artist, but I've lived the life of a writer as much as the life of a teacher. I spend tremendously long hours at my desk, working every day, right here, or in Wellfleet. My study in Wellfleet looks exactly like this. Without being an artist, I had



to employ artistic symbolization when I wrote about Chinese thought reform, the bombing of Hiroshima, or the medical killing of the Nazi doctors. I make a requirement to anchor myself in the external actuality of individuals. For a novelist or a poet, the anchoring can be in one's own mind. One's mind makes connection with external events and one writes about external events, but in more obscure, hidden ways. Novelists will say the reader can see the author's autobiography in the novel, but that is not true in any literal or descriptive sense. The symbolizing process for the artist is freer, but it begins and continues within one's own mind, making in and out contact with external influences, as is useful. I think the difference is defined by anchoring, which controls the kind of associations one works from.

**CB:** You are working inductively through characters the way a novelist does, especially with the intensive interviewing you do, getting the precise language of participants. You'll come back to transcripts of their statements and ponder vocabulary, emphasis, emotional inflections—all the speech patterns that can attest equally to the authenticity of a made-up character.

**RJL:** I'm bound to those people as I'm doing my research. A novelist isn't bound to a person but to the coherence of his created characters. My method is to make the center of my work those interviews, then move outward. I stay responsible to actual lives. But the truth of the symbolizing process is that nobody else would create those lives in the same way I do. Having said that, these lives would yet be recognizable in the hands of other people. My work begins with a focus on individual people. I have to represent them, compare them with other groups, then move outward to larger historical forces that helped to create them in the first place. I am always bound by elements outside myself. On trips to Japan in recent years I interviewed 10 people who are former members of Aum Shinrikyo, the group that released sarin gas into the Tokyo subways in March 1995. But I am also bound to the fact that World War II did certain things to Japan. Humiliating defeat was attached to the Japanese immersion into evil. These two things were terribly important for the creation of an Aum Shinrikyo. My book is called *Destroying the World to Save It* because the people in the group wanted to destroy the whole world as a form of salvation. I'm bound to the fact they did indeed release that gas.

**CB:** Authenticity derives from reality. If the event were invented, it would lack authority. If there is a storytelling process in your work, then it is to work backward from an actual event and find the origin of its impulse. A prophet or a poet, on the other hand, has to know the future.

**RJL:** Psychoanalysis is notoriously poor at predicting. There is a contradiction here. If life always moves forward as we're looking back on



HIROSHIMA, A-BOMB EXPLOSION CENTER, PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN PRIVATE COLLECTION/COURTESY SCHOOLHOUSE CENTER

it, then we have a basic difficulty. More than 15 or 20 years ago I gave up doing psychotherapy. I had practiced in a university structure. I enjoyed doing it. But when I got serious about research, I realized that the people I was treating required my full imagination. I wanted to take that imagination elsewhere and connect it with human events, not simply with a service of helping individual people. Although my kind of research depends upon holding to the actual, it still allows for freer flow of my imagination than doing psychotherapy.

**CB:** In therapy, a person comes into an office and says, "Here's my story. Your job is to help me edit these scribbles until I like it better. Cut down on this, elaborate that. Find the secret chamber and put that in the story." The story gets rewritten in the collaborative way of a conversation, until the person says, "Now the story is pretty good—even though the same elements are there, slightly mixed up with a new emphasis, it satisfies me with the sense it makes."

**RJL:** That's not a bad definition of psychotherapy. The self is about narrative. In therapy, in addition to making a better and more acceptable story, one has to cope with dire expressions of destructiveness. Why? Because one is taking the story in the wrong direction or isn't using fully the forward moving aspects of the story.

**CB:** You've been working on your book about the Tokyo gassing almost from the day it happened.

**RJL:** I'm close to completion. It brings together all the draconian events and issues that I've been studying separately.

**CB:** Have you met Shoko Asaharra, the master of the cult?

**RJL:** No, the leaders are kept in prison, completely walled off from the world. The shock overwhelmed the Japanese. But I did interview disciples of varying levels and got a vivid sense of life inside the cult. We were talking earlier about the multiple nature of all selves. The young people I interviewed who moved into Aum Shinrikyo had profound religious experiences. The same guru was capable of guiding them through religious experiences and moving toward world destruction on an individual level as well as planned mass murder. That enormously confused these young people. Incidentally, Norman Mailer has been coming to our Wellfleet meetings the last three or four years and has been a wonderful commentator and member, very interested in Aum Shinrikyo.

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**CB:** The Tokyo deaths are, like Mailer's *Executioner's Song*, about a killer who chose death in order to fulfill his life. But your executioner is oriental, not occidental.

**RJL:** Mailer's book is probably the greatest rendering we have of a criminal psychopath. He gives Gary Gilmore a whole self and shows he was capable of love, which is supposed to be seldom true of psychopaths. But people we call psychopaths have mixed components. Just as Shoko Asaharra was capable of being a religious teacher and a great teacher of yoga, so could he be a murderer, a con man, and a moneymaker. And just as Gary Gilmore was capable of being a lover, loving a woman and being loved by her, so was he a murderer in the same mind. When I wrote about doubling in my book on Nazi doctors, I talked to Norman, because he has his own idea of doubling which he calls Alpha and Omega. Nazi doctors could be in charge of the killing at Auschwitz; on leave, they went back to Germany from Poland and were fine family men. The human mind does this all the time.

**CB:** Do you feel it's possible to understand evil people, and through that understanding, forgive them?

**RJL:** When I went about studying Nazi doctors, a number of friends said to me, "Look, if you study them, you will be forgiving them because you will start to understand them." I came to see I was studying the psychological conditions conducive to evil, as a way of uncovering evil. I kept the word "evil" in my vocabulary and used it in my work. So I don't think that to grasp motivation in relation to evil has to be the same as forgiving or excusing. My immersion in the material is itself a moral search for options. My life has interplay between research and public activism. Of course once you live in Hiroshima for six months, that changes you.

**CB:** You actually lived in Hiroshima?

**RJL:** The radiation effects only lasted a matter of weeks or months. But when you live there you experience radiation effects on your mind. Since that time, 1962, I have seen the world through an indelibly real prism of Hiroshima. Everything after, for me, had to reckon with the radiation of that event.

**CB:** Vigilance is a process of questioning the choices a self makes. Let me give you an example from Mailer's *Tough Guys Don't Dance*. An old guy, an ex-boxer, is shot in an argument. He picks himself up and chases the attacker, running up Sixth Avenue, leaving a trail of blood behind, for about six blocks. When the blood sops into his shirt, he suddenly sees the emergency entrance to St. Vincent's Hospital at 12th Street. (I walked by the same sign today.) The ex-boxer opts to get his wounds dressed at the hospital. He lived, but he cursed himself for his cowardice. He failed to continue the chase. He saved his weak heart, but he failed to force the weak heart to grow stronger. Mailer demands more effort than is needed for simple survival.

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**RJL:** There is a classic Mailer existential moment, an intra-self dialogue. I always speak, in my research, of my interviews as dialogues. By that I mean a highly modified extension of the kind of psychiatric dialogue I was taught in my training. In Mailer's case, his concept of the interview is to make it a mini-novel about Norman Mailer. My interviews are bound to the actuality of the other, but that only increases the fascination I have with the dialogue. My habit is seeking dialogue. The Wellfleet Meetings are an effort to create dialogue. In New York we have a phenomenon we call "Conversations," where we clear away two hours to have eight people react to someone's work-in-progress. The Socratic mode is probably closer to an inquiry. Socrates was always making inquiries, a dialogue in the service of teaching, a very vivid method. Whereas the atmosphere of our meetings offers an ideal of exchange on an equal basis—talking, listening, and expanding our understanding in a back and forth way with each other. It sounds simple, but it's very rare, especially in academic life.

**CB:** How did literature become a source as crucial as history for you?

**RJL:** In my training, I couldn't stand reading the psychoanalytic literature. It was poorly written and dull. I found literary critics to be closer to psychological writers on society and history. Way back, between the mid-'50s and the mid-'60s, was a great age of literary critics.

**CB:** It was the end of the New Criticism.

**RJL:** People like Lionel Trilling and Edmund Wilson and Alfred Kazin meant a lot to me. My inclination, along with friends and the guidance I received, always took me to literature. Perhaps, as you say, to function as stand-ins for my ideas. But also to help provide me with a perspective and a language, which I didn't want to take alone from psychoanalytic tradition. In fact, it felt wrong. Others like me feel this.

**CB:** Freud himself said he got all his lessons from philosophers and poets. He constantly cited them. If we psychoanalyze Proteus, the Greek god who is the namesake of your book, we see that his father was Neptune and that he, too, appears most often in water, disappearing under the waves and out of our grasp. Proteus knows all things—the past, the passing, and the future—but he will not willingly tell you. The sage had to be tied with chains and held fast until he ceased to shapeshift (he would change in quick succession from a wild animal to the sound of fire crackling to the rush of water). For both Stanley Kunitz and Mailer, Proteus is explicitly important.

**RJL:** Stanley is taken with proteanism, but Norman, in a Norman Mailer style told me: "I'm reading *The Protean Self* on the can!" He is reading it in his bathroom at interludes. Some months later he said, "You've been replaced. I'm reading something else on the can." I told him that one

does not like to be replaced. He said, "I'm not so sure I believe this."

**CB:** Believe your book?

**RJL:** Proteanism. He didn't want to say why.

**CB:** In Michael Lennon's introduction to his forthcoming bio-bibliography of Mailer, the first sentence reads: "Mailer is Proteus."

**RJL:** Of course he is! We never really talked that out. There are some things he does not want to talk out. He just wants to say them and think about it by himself. He meant to say that you can't get by on proteanism alone, and I agree with him. I tell the story in my book about the graduate student I met who said, "Hey, Lifton, I tried being a protean man. It doesn't work." He only proved that you couldn't make transformation an idol, going through continuous transformation and nothing else. You need some anchor to be creatively protean. I believe Mailer was thinking about that. Mailer is so fully protean that he loses his consciousness in each enterprise.

**CB:** He creates characters that are forces for aspects of his ego, but you can't find a complete alter-ego figure in his work, the way you can in writers such as Henry Miller or D. H. Lawrence. You said that you had a need to work through actual characters; I think that is equally a need of Mailer's. His characters are always balanced in an ethical accounting of pros and cons. There will be a good person who has a lot of bad, and a bad person who has a lot of good. These opponents will clash. He creates as much tension as he can.

**RJL:** He likes antipathies. Mailer thrives on nuance but nuance is not the word one would use to describe him. He carries contradictions to an extreme. Early on, his essays influenced me. I felt parallel ideas about the radical influence on history, the Holocaust, the nuclear bombings. He sensed immediately that it was important to relate his experiments in consciousness with the post-War world. I learned from his sensibility about the extremity of history, and the power of collective influence on individual minds.

**CB:** You met Mailer when you moved to Wellfleet in the late '50s?

**RJL:** Yes.

**CB:** In Mailer's political writings, the Democrats and the Republicans fight like God and the Devil, but one can't be sure which is which. I was just reading his portrait of Bob Dole, which is amazingly sympathetic. Mailer said his job was to be a novelist and enter the mind of Bob Dole, so he took a "plunge," he said, and spoke in telegraphic prose that was more Dole than Dole. Mailer's Dole looks at Clinton, sweating under hot lights before a debate, and thinks, "The fat boy might melt!"

**RJL:** In Mailer's running for mayor of New York, his political anger and expressions of contempt, were also, at once, Mailer the artist.

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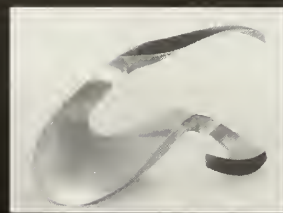
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CB: Sometimes our government does something to earn our awe, like send man to the moon. And in his book, *Of a Fire on the Moon*, does not Mailer identify himself with the collective force of the country?

RJL: He does. He cares a lot about American life and the social forces around us. His political and social range is great. Hemingway began to orchestrate the rhythms of his life, including his sex life, to fit in best with his writing. And so Mailer's vast forays into society and politics suit his needs as an artist. Once or twice I've seen Mailer behave so that his friends were embarrassed, but I began to be less troubled. At times he even thrusts himself in self-demeaning directions, in order to draw from it, something that otherwise he could not touch. It's not all controlled.

CB: So what appears dysfunctional on one level functions effectively for the creative self?

RJL: If you are trying to produce the range of work that Mailer has risked, that is part of it.

CB: You mention the idea of humiliation. It is very important for Mailer's characters to be aware of their weaknesses and vulnerabilities. In your concept of the protean, a strength is produced when change is fostered by the self's very faults, yet the change, exhilarating as it may be at moments, is fraught with anxiety, because everything is shifting.

RJL: You are never completely stable.

CB: In *The Protean Self*, anxiety becomes part of the condition. I once asked Motherwell if he felt anxious about his work. He said, "Constantly." He assumed the artist must learn to live with it, or else get out of the transformation business. In my case, tennis has taught me how to keep a certain dignity even when I lose a match.

RJL: It's interesting to compare a structured sport with Mailer's approach. If we talk about tennis, in which it takes some discipline to lose an important match and still be gracious, it's a discipline that, in losing, teaches the self to add losing to its knowledge, so an aspect is added to the structure. With Mailer, the humiliation is moving out of the structure or destroying a fragile structure. It's more risky to him and by no means entirely voluntary.

CB: Unless something is at stake in an artist's metaphors, they are playing on a level where the pressure is too low to inspire something extraordinary.

RJL: When I first knew Mailer, his exploration was at a maximum. Now he risks writing books that are going to meet with hostility. He will write books even if he doubts he has the energy. That's risk.

*Christopher Busa's interview with Sideo Fromboluti appears elsewhere in these pages.*

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# Gifted

by Melanie Braverman

For Curt Cole, Ken Corbett, Michael Cunningham, Sal Randolph, and Ladd Spiegel

My friends and I have a long-standing tradition of the Craft Day. I believe it was Michael and Kenny who hosted the first of these events. A group of people spent an afternoon on Captain Jack's Wharf fashioning bathing suits out of old clothes from the Truro Swap Shack. The official end of Craft Day involved a leap into the calm August bay, to see which bathing suits would sink and which would swim. One of the few regrets of my life, and I am not kidding, is that I wasn't there. Instead, we heard about it that night at a dinner party my girlfriend and I had wangled an invitation to, whereat our common complaint, "We want to play too!" roused us to invite them to our house for a Clay Day. The odd flower shapes another friend made are still in my studio, unglazed and forlorn, because he is dead now and I can neither hand them over to his lover undone, nor finish them, knowing that he would want to see them decorated in a way I still, after five years, can't quite imagine. Michael made a line of wonky houses; Sal made a collection of perforated tiles that she eventually sewed together with wire; I made the little pinch pots I was at the time obsessed with, happy to sit around my big kitchen table the way I did when I was a child, devouring the chatter as if it were food. (These are smart, highly verbal people I play with, and some of our favorite communal craft projects are the generation of crackpot theories and conversation which veers crazily from Freud to Prada to the latest episode of *ER*.)

Labor Day was especially dramatic that year: these new friends went back to New York; Christmas came; and we fell to the delicious task of making gifts for each other. We have spent long afternoons making dolls and amulets, really bad dioramas, needlecrafts and papercrafts and lamps and soap. We have enlisted others into the crafting ranks: family members, friends who feel at first utterly disinclined. The displays in our houses change every six months or so, the more recent gifts commanding dominant spots on the shelves, the walls, the floor. The more successful projects remain. Unlike the work I now sell to strangers, when I give Ladd a crocheted tea set, even though it amuses me greatly and I am a little sad to see it go, I know I can visit it whenever I visit him, as if I'm greeting myself when I walk in his door.

In the realm of gift-giving, issues of authenticity, originality, and intellectual exclusivity fall far behind the more pressing issue of delight: will this please the recipient? Will he get it? Will

she love it? We steal copiously from other people's ideas (is this too Joseph Cornell/Gonzalez-Torres/Kiki Smith? Who cares? It's a Christmas craft, for godssake). More egregious still, we steal from each other: Ladd makes the most fabulous, sweetly pathetic sock monkeys in the known universe, and over the years we've all made at least one, adaptations to be sure (Curt's first turned out to be a sock cow), but none so splendid as Ladd's, who surely understands his place as Sock Monkey Mentor Manque, our inspiration.

We follow directions for cheesy projects we tear out of magazines in doctors' offices; we copy things we find at flea markets. We wrap them in paper and squeal and jump up and down when they are finally, after weeks of secrecy, revealed. Our gift-making breaks any number of Real Art rules: plagiarism, homeliness, disregard for technique; even (heaven forbid) usefulness: for Michael's birthday one year I made him some canvas coasters; a set of 10, each one has embroidered on it a word that begins with a vowel—ugly or uppity, for instance, angry or angst. I go to his apartment and there they are on the table, colored now by coffee rings and splatters. The value of the things we make for each other lies not so much in the object but in the gifting of the object, which is in itself impervious to damage or use.

Busy in our daily lives as writers, artists, psychologists, and physicians, working hard is something we know how to do; and, lest one come away with the notion that our crafting infers the tossing off of something, rest assured

that the labor invested in some of these projects is considerable: one of Sal's Christmas projects this year was a feat of obsession—styrofoam balls wrapped meticulously with pipe cleaners, studded with beads and pom poms. These she made in quantity and gave to all of us. Even though we've never discussed it, gifting, at least to us, seems to involve some kind of equity, no one getting more than anyone else.

It would be disingenuous of me to say that none of these projects have roots in what any of us consider our "real" work; those coasters became a prototype for a large quilt I ended up making that winter, shown in my gallery the following summer. Or that the Christmas crafts haven't spun into something more serious—we are, after all, ambitious, forward-thinking people, in no way immune to the lures of the bigger world. Indeed, what began five years ago as gestures of love and amusement for each other has generated what now looks like a serious body of work, the work of a very particular, however eclectic, school of art. Years ago, we dubbed our enterprise Not Too Big/Not Too Stupid. Is this how movements are born?

What marks the things we make: intelligence, humor, beauty, an irony one could call domestic; most of all there is a striving to recognize and honor the other—I see you, I made you something, I love you.

*Melanie Braverman, a writer, poet, and visual artist, is the author of East Justice (Permanent Press).*

LADD SPIEGEL, SOCK MONKEY, 1998



## Top Job in America

by Linsey Smith

Art is a way of life for me, a state of being. I grew up on Pearl Street, right next to the Fine Arts Work Center and the Cape Cod School of Art. I used to get paid for artists to paint and draw me. That's when I realized what I wanted to do—being an artist has been my dream since I was a little girl.

Art is a communion with people and our environment. Artists know how to express themselves and like to share their expressions with others. When I view artwork, I like to imagine what is happening in the artist's head. Working on my own creations, I am in a trance of focus. It's different for everyone. For years the saying has been "the starving artist." This doesn't have to be so. It's the top job in America. Art may seem expensive to a person just window shopping, but I feel it is priceless.

Growing up in Provincetown, I've seen many different types and styles of art. I have tried photography and studied creative writing through a fresh project called "Shadow." Now I am learning a new language called HTML, designing my own web page. I am also interested in fashion design. Dressing in the morning is an artistic

statement. I think of visual artists as picture poets. With writing, you get the point right away, but with art, everybody sees their own story. It's time for me to evolve, maybe become another van Gogh.

It's easy to get discouraged when you draw and the picture doesn't turn out as you'd like. Also, when your support—meaning your friends and family—aren't into the artist's world. But Provincetown allows people to be as different and creative as they want. There isn't any judgment, which is why we have so much talent here. I feel privileged to take a stroll and see artists on the streets drawing and painting beautiful scenes and beautiful people. Here I get to see magic in the making and the hidden talents of my own mind. That's inspiration.

*Linsey Smith is a three-year participant in the Shadow Writing Project, directed by Kathe Izzo. She will begin studies at the Art Institute of Ft. Lauderdale this fall.*

# Art is



# Reality's Shadow Twin

BILL T. JONES AND GERMAUL BARNES IN BALLAD, 1996

by Bill T. Jones

*A lecture given with slight variation, at the Institute of Arts and Humanities in Chapel Hill, NC, in October 1997 and subsequently at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and SUNY New Paltz.*

Recently during the consuming act of choreographing, I had an unusual moment of disengagement. I was able to watch myself at work. The moment occurred during the tango movement of my latest evening-length work, *We Set Out Early...Visibility was Poor*. In this section of the dance, two men perform a tango, however they never touch. One remains aloof and upright; the other is prone, mirroring the standing man as if he were a reflection in a body of water.

This is not a conventional tango, needless to say. Performing the quirky movements on his back, Eric, the man on the floor, looks absolutely bizarre. From my rare, distant perspective, I tried to imagine what an "average" person, perhaps unfamiliar with my dance, or any dance, might make of this peculiar display. What is the nature of this moment, or of my entire body of work? I am hard-pressed to define or describe it, though I have often tried. I am convinced that, in this life, the defining of my work is not my responsibility. Instead, I would like to ask: What is art? Why and how does a work of art come into the world, and what is its purpose?

Art is primarily an intellectual activity. Art is filling space and/or time, beautifully. Art holds up a mirror to reality. Art is reality's shadow twin. Art speaks the unspeakable. Art is a dream. Art is one of the earliest human activities of which we now have a record. Art is desire made evident. Art is everything man creates that is useless. Art is a tool. Art is good for us.

Yungchen Lhamo is an accomplished Tibetan singer. She speaks freely of a life of hardship and deep spiritual belief. Though Yungchen is typically Tibetan in her humility, she has a will of iron and very specific opinions on things aesthetic and moral. She has no interest in music in which she cannot understand the source of the composer's inspiration. As a result, she approves of very little she hears. After a magical dinner one evening, Yungchen remarked that her greatest concern is that she be of service to others. I responded with a paraphrase of Oscar Wilde, saying, "All that mankind creates that is not useful is art." This idea was met with scorn by Yungchen. She feels artistic effort is futile if it does not engender positive emotion in the spectator. The problem here is the word "useful." I believe Wilde was being typically ironic in implying that art is useless. Non-utilitarian is more what I think he meant. I believe that art, even at its most opaque, is useful because of its potential to inspire.

I recalled my exchange with Yungchen last week when I read a front-page *New York Times* story on a National Endowment for the Arts study finding that because artists have isolated themselves and created elitist works, the public feel stupid and unwilling to support arts programs. That very day, I spoke with a journalist at a rehearsal of my new work. Somewhat flustered, she wanted me to tell her what had been going on. Why this music? Why the gestures? She spoke of having recently attended two symposia at which participants concluded that audience attendance is down because art producers and presenters are not preparing the audience to receive the works. So, people feel intimidated and reluctant to attend.

"Movement doesn't lie," said the great priestess, Martha Graham. What of my bizarre floor-bound tango? What is the truth in the apparent difficulty of performing a standing movement while lying flat? For me the truth, the beauty of the sequence, exists in its layering. The first layer

is the music. Stravinsky conceived this tango music in an ironic, tongue-in-cheek fashion. Secondly, atypically, it is danced by two men. One man is black, the other white. One stands, the other struggles on the floor. It is not explained nor is it ever referred to again.

I see life and relationships as I see this sequence, ripe with resonance but imperfectly perceived, moving by so quickly that there is nothing more than a vague trace, a scent, left behind. Art is a mirror. As a participant in life, I can hardly ask it to explain itself, to slow down or "run that by me again" (though it does do so, sometimes, in the most mysterious manner). In a dance, or in art in general, we have compositional devices designed to help the viewer; repetition, variations on the theme, and contrast can allow the spectator to "apprehend" significance. Oftentimes this is not enough. Yet providing more than that is dubious and perhaps counterproductive. The act of being a spectator is re-creation as much as recreation. In other words, the spectator is invited into a process as a creative collaborator.

Does the world have a significance other than that with which I supply it? My mind tells me no, but my body, destined to be born, grow, and die, knows better. Does a work of art have a significance other than the one I bring to it? I think not. It is the act of viewing art that rewards us. Communion. Communion is the reward of looking and thinking with one's own eyes and mind.

At an antiques trade show I heard a dealer explaining that in Europe, because people are more in the habit of looking at art, they are less intimidated by it. They form their own opinions about quality and value and rely less on experts to tell them what is good. I have a friend, actually more a family member, one of those world citizens who, born in Germany, speaks five or six languages and possesses a French passport. Like many of his countrymen, he loves New York and many things American. But he is a re-



lentless social critic. He notes that in New York City to get a cappuccino you have to choose between toppings, flavors, sizes, etc. He feels the same tendency makes the art experience self-conscious and inorganic to people's lives and imagines uneasy persons saying, "Are we getting all that we should get? Are we getting it right? Are we doing it correctly?"

As I pick my way through this trail of anecdotes and conjectures, I believe I could be trying to let artists off the hook in the current crisis of the box office.

I recently met Alex Kerr, an expert in Chinese and Japanese art and culture. Here is a person who knows about the pursuit of understanding in the face of the obtuse, opaque and unfamiliar. In his brilliant book, *Lost Japan*, he quotes Kawase, a master flower arranger: "Showing something natural, in its native state, is not art. Artifice piled on artifice, giving you the illusion of the natural—that's art. If you are going to draw people into your dream, then you must make it completely convincing. If the dream is not perfect, then it will feel unnatural. Only the most perfect dream approaches reality."

Art is a dream brought to perfection. Last week, I witnessed such a dream in the work of the great modern dance master, Merce Cunningham. On his stage there is very little that resembles reality or nature, save the extremely articulate bodies of his dancers, defying gravity, executing sequences of such complexity as to suggest the workings of the insect world, or computerized thought. These works are big things, spreading out in time and space. They are also extremely difficult to watch because they are often devoid of the seasoning that helps great art go down, like sentiment, sex, story line.

I was seated behind a family of mother, father, and two children. The small ones were on their best behavior, however, one could see their postures erode. Little heads began to bump agitatedly into their mother's ribs and shoulders as they attempted to cope with the aggressive music and boredom. I have no doubt this night was "good for them," but their experience was pained. During the applause at the end, as I shouted "bravo," the boy, about 12 years old, turned around and shot me a look of such disdained incomprehension that I could only smile sheepishly in my defense.

I thought of the NEA study as I watched these young heads butting their mother, and see in this scenario an irresistible metaphor. The children were not at fault for not understanding or even enjoying the performance. Merce Cunningham is certainly not at fault for creating work that requires time, commitment, and a certain strength of character to contend with. In my scenario, the parents are heroes. They understand a fundamental truth—this night's experience is only the beginning of a process, a foundation. It must be followed with other such experiences and lots of dialogue, questionings and cross-referencing, a lively discourse wherein issues aesthetic, social, and spiritual, have a lively play. The parents are the custodians of the chil-

dren, and are responsible for providing them a gift, a key to what they may someday value, even love.

I realize this is a troublesome metaphor. It is probably insulting to many people who distrust contemporary art in general, who might feel I am dismissing their taste as childish. I can only say that I mean no offense. I know from my own life that when certain experiences are represented in a cogent and generous manner, followed up with humane, invigorating dialogue, and given time to find their places in a vast, personal reference library of association, I am only too willing to endorse them. They become precious to me. I value them.

My metaphor is troubling, too, if one chooses to see our government—in this instance the NEA—as a custodian or parent. The actual parent is responsible for the existence of the child and for protecting the child from the abusive and the inappropriate. The NEA, on the other hand, should represent the highest aspirations of the people themselves, acting as a connoisseur, coach, curator, and a sort of Socratic educator.

Karl Jasper, in *The Great Philosophers*, speaks of the Socratic education: "What Socrates meant by education was not some casual operation that the knower performs on the unknowing, but the element in which men, communicating with each other, come to themselves, in which the truth opens up to them. The young men helped him when he wanted to help them. He taught them to discover the difficulties in the seemingly self-evident; he confused them, forced them to think, to search, to inquire over and over again, and not to sidestep the answer, and this they could bear because they were convinced that truth is what joins men together."

In its role as Socratic educator, the NEA does not behave as a parent but as a challenging equal. And what of the local community's curators and presenters? The NEA allows them to do their job—the selection and mounting of works of art and informing the community of, and preparing it for, the upcoming event. The presenter, as a servant and consultant, broadens the adult individual's menu of free-time activity. In a mature culture, in a healthy society, the average adult would have a curiosity, a hunger even, for the experiences and insights that art and culture can provide.

When I was an infant, after my bath, my mother would take my tiny skull in her hands and squeeze it gently, mold it, so that it would be "pretty and round," she'd say. To this day I feel her fingerprints on my skull. Likewise, I feel the solid imprint of all the high-mindedness directed at my generation around the issues of art as self-improvement or education. And so, when I go to a gallery or museum, I have a tremendous appetite and I always feel I have something to learn.

I direct plays and musicals and write poetry, but primarily I am a choreographer, a performing artist who makes dances. Dance is the movement of persons and things in space and time. A choreographer invents and organizes this movement. Movement is ephemeral. The body is

tethered unconditionally to both time and space. I do envy other art forms. I envy words in the hands of a capable writer. The writer invites us into an experience that is at once as intimate as a one-on-one conversation and as immense as a universe, without constraints of time and space. I covet sculpture for its concise use of form, space, and point of view. These are also the lifeblood of good choreography, but the sculptural object appears free of the element of time and the appetites of audience.

Recently, in a post-performance discussion, two young people who had never seen modern dance asked me the meaning of each of the four dances in the performance. The great Martha Graham was known to say, "If I could answer that, I wouldn't dance about it." Merce Cunningham might say, "What does it mean to you?" More and more, I find myself asking this question about my art and art in general, and answers elude me.

We have all heard an artist exclaim, "My work is like a child to me." Why do people have children? In the best-case scenario:

*To express a profound union with another.* Oddly enough, artists often create to express some feeling of separation, of division. Perhaps the work is the artist's attempt to resolve or at least articulate this conflict. Through the work the artist strives for a union so to speak or, perhaps more accurately, a reunion. I am reminded here of a notion in Vedic philosophy that describes "all-that-was" (God), in the time before time, as feeling lonesome. Therefore he/she exploded his/her oneness into the many so that the unifying principle in all creation became the desire of the lover for the beloved. In the more ecstatic realms of art creation, the yearning, the desire to create, is best described as a need for reunion.

*To attain a sort of immortality.* Obviously art has given a brand of immortality to some artists, and is a seductive prospect.

*To correct or improve on the systems of child-rearing they were subject to, or observed.* An artist could make a body of work to disprove assumptions about what art is or should be. An artist might see the history of art, a recent term, as an ongoing discourse in which they wish to participate.

*To respond to the ticking of the biological clock.* Is art-making a biological urge such as war-making? I am not so sure. I don't pretend to be an anthropologist. However, classical textbooks on the history of art begin by referring to our prehistoric ancestors, saying that art is the oldest human activity of which we have a record. Should we assume that it is an integral part of who we are, of what makes us human?

Finally, a child might be created out of a love for the idea of the child, its potential, a benediction of sorts, an affirmation of... This is my creed, my belief in why I make art.

It is here that I return to my art—dance and dance-making. It originates in a feeling state, a desire. Martha Graham describes dance as a "fever chart of the heart." And she goes on to say, "desire is a lovely thing, and that is where the



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dance comes from, from desire." I agree heartedly.

When I was a young man, I wanted to fly. A selfish urge, it's true. With time, I wanted to identify with things that flew and I looked for models, for teachers, and they showed me a world populated with persons who dedicated their lives to this desire to fly and innumerable other human aspirations. Some spoke to me more deeply than others. I was intrigued, and still am, by the individual's perception as it dissolves into the allusive, all pervasive discourse that we call human consciousness. I noticed that standing in front of a beautiful painting or watching an inspired performance on stage, I could have moments wherein I forgot where I ended and the thing or event began. I wanted to participate in the making of such things and still do.

In a solo from 1977 entitled *Everybody Works*, I see all the themes of what was to be my artistic life. What we encounter first is a man who is gesturing in space. And then he speaks. The speech is unrelated to what is danced, and the struggle to perform these disparate tasks asserts itself. The story speaks of an "I" communicating with "Them" striving to affirm a "We."

In *We Set Out Early... Visibility Was Poor*, I don't perform. The dancer's ego is giving way to the choreographer's. In this work there are strong references to the history of art and maybe even to society as a group of individuals attempting to cope with the circumstance, or perhaps the burden, of being together. I have never been a purist who relies exclusively on movement to create a vision. I think of myself as a poetic organizer of events, of which movements are a predominant part. Almost all of the movement in *We Set Out Early... Visibility Was Poor* originated in my body responding improvisationally to the music. As I viewed the videotapes of these improvisations, I could see my history, my education, my country, my sexuality, my race, even my beliefs, in the turn of a head, the raising of an arm or a back's swoop, a leg's lunge in space.

Much of the work's sense is in the wildly diverse group of 10 performers who are not asked to create characters, but perform tasks. Where they stand, how they move. Who and how they touch. This is the real meaning of the piece. In this work there is much suggestion of speech, soundless mouthing of words, whispers, chants, and singing. But the piece strives for a world that is beyond speech. As I said earlier, movement does not lie. This is where I place my faith—in the movement I have left in my own body, in the bodies of my dancers, and in generations of dancers to come.

*Dancer, choreographer, and artistic director of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, Bill T. Jones is a bold advocate for social and artistic responsibility. His awards include two Bessie's, several NEA grants and honorary doctorates, and the 1994 MacArthur Fellowship. Last Night on Earth (Pantheon), Jones' memoirs, was published in 1995, and his children's book, Dance (Hyperion), in 1998.*

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# Welcome to **P-Town, Inc.'s Survivalist Camp Resort**

Thanksgiving Day, 1999—April Fool's Day, 2000

The World's Only Gayted Theme Park for Well-heeled Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Survivalists Fleeing Botheration from Y2K



by Jay Critchley

You arrive at High Head on Route 6 in North Truro in early December 1999, fleeing the city and the botheration of Y2K. Magnificent Provincetown Harbor offers its familiar welcoming embrace, punctuated by the fulcrum of its identity, the Pilgrim Monument, twinkling in its skirted holiday splendor. You speed alongside Pilgrim Lake in your sports futility vehicle and breathe a sigh of relief upon sighting the entrance to P-Town, Inc., formerly known as Provincetown. This Disneyesque theme park for upscale lesbians, bisexuals, and gays—"lesbigays"—is unveiling the world's only Survivalist Camp Resort for discerning lesbigay millenarians.

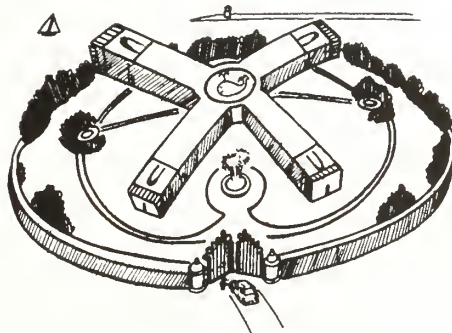
At the theme park border's Visitor Processing Center Field Station, emblazoned with the familiar P-Town, Inc. "X" logo—four Pilgrim Monument "tops" with a cutesy whale imprinted on the requisite Rainbow Flag—you lower your power window to hear the disco anthem, "I Will Survive." In front of the gaggle of entering vehicles appears the Survivalist Camp Resort Welcoming Committee—a Victorian, Turn-of-the-Century-themed group including a Big Game Hunter, an Aviator, a Missionary with several scantily-clad converts, a Tarzan figure with Jane and Cheeta in tow, and several Ladies-in-Waiting in full-length velvet gowns. You squeal in delight as the ensemble moves in unison to the rhythm, and you find yourself out on the pavement in the crisp air, dancing in utopian bliss with dozens of other like-minded Survivalists. You have arrived!

Luckily you had pre-registered for this much-anticipated escape, having sent in the extensive questionnaire—including the all-important stool sample—to assure conformity to theme park behavior, fashion, spending, and liquidity standards. The Gaydar Testing Kit creates individualized virtual simulation profiles on beauty habits and product use, exercise routines, intelligence indicators, culinary and epicurean quotients, psychological proclivities, shoppertainment, post-suburban decorative tastes, and of course, sexual practices and fantasies. While some of this may seem intrusive, in the wide scope of gay culture it is de rigueur, a small price to pay for a safe, controlled, homogeneous, and pre-planned environment.

This gathering has not been without controversy. Secure in your sports futility vehicle you notice groupings of unfashionably dressed people, huddling around small fires scattered along the highway at the border checkpoint. Chants of "Free P-Town" and "Free Millie" are heard muffled through the tinted glass windows. A sign reads: "The fish shall be last, and the last shall be fish." For months cries of elitism were

heard, and fears of ghettoizing the gay community were voiced by the homophobic straight press. But it isn't about gender, you implore, it's about money—class. Even passé lesbigay and gender-friendly social justice radicals, unable to adapt to the corporate culture of the times, rallied against the highly visible P-Town, Inc. logo. Wasn't the "X" really a crucifix? Wasn't the Skull & Cross Bones motif stolen from the Pirates—those revisionist Robin Hoods of the sea? And wasn't that cartoon whale maligning these gentle giants and downplaying our part in the gruesome whale hunting that built Provincetown? And what about Malcolm X?

Survivalists claimed the protesters were out of touch—the bottom line was that the hard-working retreatants had struggled hard and de-



P-TOWN, INC. GAYTED CORPORATE COMPOUND  
DRAWING: GEORGE CROSBY

served to "just wanna have fun." After all, they said, we create and define our own images just like straight culture. Everyone knows that Mickey Mouse's ears are women's breasts, and that McDonald's Golden Arches create an energy field that lures traditional family units to buy Value Meals. Create the magic!

"Be prepared for the worst in the best of comfort" reads a sign worn by Ms. Body Touristic, sashaying to "We Are Family," and accessorized in catchy slogans promoting this fishing village-turned-theme park. She is a proven lure for well-heeled clientele. This moment is opportune for development of this premiere upmarket, lesbigay, yearround destination—appropriately incorporated as P-Town, Inc.—Formerly Provincetown ("You'll swear you were really there"). "Let's Be More Than Summer Customers." In 1997 a small group of community-minded visionaries realized the town's potential to fulfill a lucrative marketing niche—Ye Olde Cape Cod Seaport for upscale lesbigay baby

boomers. Provincetown's historic acceptance of queers, its compact scale, and its one highway in and out of town make it an ideal location for a makeover. So what's on the drawing boards?

The park centerpiece is the Front Street Mall & Arcade, an enclosed, climate-controlled, four-season, domed shopping extravaganza "mall" Commercial Street and contouring along the full sweep of the harbor. A model borrowed from Disney World and "Upstairs, Downstairs" divides the above ground—officially sanctioned visitors and residents, from the below ground—workers, starving artists, families, and support "caste" members who service the above ground theater. The millennial "crisis," for many another opportunity to party, has sped up the development of Phase I: refurbishing the hundreds of septic tanks abandoned when the town's first municipal sewer system goes on line this fall. This underground infrastructure, the very bowels of the theme park, will consist of septic condos, kivas, and catacomb-like passages. Gayly-appointed subterranean dwellings will provide luxury bomb shelter-like accommodations throughout the Y2K crisis, and later house workers and "caste" members. All units will be equipped with Grinder Pumps (required for downtown properties hooked up to a high-tech sewage system in the new federally designated Historic Underground Septic District). Grinder Pumps can also be employed in an emergency to grind up government surplus corn and wheat.

Peace of mind is what brings visitors here, so security will be the top priority of the Camp Resort. The Rev. Phelps Peacekeeper Swat Team, dressed in pious Pilgrim uniforms, will be responsible for control of border crossings, by land or sea, where "boat people" seeking refuge, or party crashers, will be swiftly turned away. Swat Team encampments will be set up in the dune shacks and lifesaving stations of the Cape Cod National Seashore, doubling as CampOut—a boot camp experience for the masculinity-challenged.

Following client analysis and behavioral remediation at the Visitor Processing Center, Survivalists survey the amazing makeover of town, then cruise the Gay Golden Triangle—anchored by the Boatslip, the Crown & Anchor, and the Gifford House, with the A-House at its heart. You visit the Center for Fecal Studies at the Heritage Museum—a cutting-edge research and development laboratory for analyzing the town's historic septic waste, the community's historic movements from straight to gay, and the transition from individual systems to the new town-managed sewage district. The Center's featured exhibition, "The History of the Art



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Colony's Excrement, 1899-1999," will commemorate our status as America's oldest continuous art colony.

If the Center for Fecal Studies is the bowels, then P-Town, Inc.'s Gayted Corporate Compound is the brains. On the high dune of Telegraph Hill, the "X"-shaped building houses corporate headquarters as well as the offices of the Provincetown Business Guild and the municipal Visitor Services Board, and a heliport. Only fully processed P-Town, Inc. GOLDCARD<sup>TM</sup> members will be admitted for a tour and cocktails.

Next you will walk down to MacMillan Wharf and board a glass-bottom boat to view the venerable *Rose Dorothea* Underwater Memorial Shrine, a half-scale model of Provincetown's prize-winning Grand Banks Schooner, embedded in the bottom mud of Provincetown Harbor. Designer wet suits and scuba diving gear will be provided for the hardy who wish to view close up this salt water-preserved monument to Provincetown's glory days as a notable fishing port.

You'll head up to Bradford Street, via Jamaica Way, for photo opportunities at the new and fabulous luxury accommodations, Crowne Pointless, before squeezing in a stop at The Lobster Claw Commitment Chapel at Clem & Ursie's—site of the world-famous figuratively-challenged lobster claw exhibition. A special Christmas Carol Sing at the Septic Space Theater in the Ground will feature underground caroling, with specially written holiday tunes, such as "I'm Dreamin' of a Rainbow Lite Christmas," and a tribute to the lesbigay shopping weekend, "Holly Folly's Comin', Don't Frown." What would a lesbigay Survivalist Camp Resort stay be like without experiencing Provincetown's fabulous night life? Survivalist Chic after-hour events are climaxed by a late night stop at the renowned male bonding pier, Frequent Flyer's Boat Yard.

Whether for a few weeks or a few months, there is no better, safer, more fun-filled place for you to weather the Y2K botheration and bring in the new millennium. After your fabulous stay, you pack up your sports futility vehicle—your Palm Pilot networked for future ventures and day trading, and you cross the P-Town, Inc. border, heading down Route 6 towards the city. You have proudly earned your Boy or Girl Scout Merit Badge in Campcraft, and perhaps additional badges in Fruit & Nut Growing or Dramatics. Gliding past Pilgrim Lake and up to High Head, you catch one last glance in your rearview mirror of the Pilgrim Monument and tune into Cher. "Do you believe in life after love?"

*A visual, conceptual, and performance artist, Jay Critchley has lived in Provincetown for 24 years. Critchley is also founder and director of the Provincetown Community Compact, an activist arts organization. His Survivalist Camp Resort Placemat, a special centennial gift, accompanies this issue of Provincetown Arts.*



# Universal Cycle

by Eileen Myles

*A Commencement Address given at Hampshire College, May 1998*

I was wondering if all commencement speakers feel compelled to address their own college experience. I'd rather not. I wanted to focus on you guys, even for just a little while. I tried to get some statistics from the school about who you are—you know, boys, girls, straight and gay—racially, ethnically, economically and age-wise. I bet you're not all 21 years old but here it is May 16 and I never found out. I see that you're not wearing those outfits that are all the same. So, one by one you know who you are. I bet a few of you are depressed. Not everyone feels good at graduation. Some of you feel great, some of you are worried, someone's sick, someone's in love, someone's mother died this year. I hope that's not true, but it happens. Everything does. I have some photographs of myself graduating from college. Don't worry, I didn't bring them, but those pictures replaced any memories I might have had of that day. I see me from the outside walking down an aisle in a white cap and gown in Boston and that's all that I know. I'd like to be here with you.

You have given me an honorable job. I didn't know what I was going to do with my life when I got out of college. I'm 48, I'm probably a lot of your parents' age, more or less. I haven't had any kids—I mean I definitely won't. It's a very hot year, 1998, the earth moving closer and closer to the sun and me going through menopause, so now I definitely won't. I teach a lot, and I have a lot of friends in their 20s and I like your generation tremendously. I feel very close to you, and you'd probably like my poetry if you read it, it's basically just like this talk, it's something to do. Being a poet is a job, but it's a made up one. There's no job description and that's what I like. I liked the vague feeling of being in college. It was exciting. I discovered that loving literature could be a job and then I decided I didn't want that one, and I got depressed. A lot more happened to me when I was in college but what was wonderful about college as an institution is that it encompassed everything that I felt, it held me for a while, and people would say, what do you do and I'd say that I was a student and they'd say great. You couldn't go wrong, it was like washing your clothes. No one argues with laundry, or the identity of a student, it's a cyclical thing, you just have to go through and I did.

I mean it's a little like riding a bike. You just keep pedaling, and the wheels go round and round and you get someplace. You can't help it.

And you see someone you know and they say what are you doing and you say riding a bike. I mean you could have just robbed a bank, but it looks so innocent.

This is a nice place. It's a beautiful place. It must have been nice to go to school here. The thing I found about being outside of college, is that you have to figure out when everything stops and starts. You walk into the bank and you get in line. You may not like it, but you stay. You don't have to. You go into a restaurant and you get a cup of coffee and the coffee's bad and you get up and walk out. You go home and you call a friend. Then you think, I wish I called someone else. One day you're standing in front of the Eiffel Tower and you think this is great. It is exactly the way I expected it. I had that feeling at least once in my life. Some things are utterly satisfying. The Taj Mahal on the other hand was a total disappointment. India was not. But the Taj Mahal was not so good. Life is so incomplete. College isn't. It isn't at all. It's just you. So I just got out of college and I've done an awful lot of things but basically I started traveling and writing poems. I like traveling because I like an activity, but you really don't know what you're going to get. Russia, for instance, just kind of ruined my life. I didn't know that was going to happen. How would I know that. I wanted to change my life. Now I've got to wait a few years to see exactly in what way it ruined my life so I can write about it. Basically I've been writing poems. I got out of college and they just came pouring out of me. They're all over everything. Napkins, stationery from so many different jobs. Notebooks, notebooks of all sizes.

I was looking at a big box of notebooks the other day and I pulled one out of the box, 1964. I was 14. In the notebook I would talk about school, and I would talk about what I ate, and how Janet felt about me, but there was this one thing—my entry would go March 5th—C+ day. Then it would be a not bad day—B minus. I was rating the days, that's what my life was when I was 14. I couldn't imagine living without saying how much. How bad, how good. That's what I did. I looked around. I had stopped praying by then. But I looked at time, rows of it, days and days, the ones I was in and I said bad, good, okay.

But I don't do that anymore. See a poem is a tiny institution. I just write lots and lots of them, and it gives me a way to be in the world. It's actually a very worldly job, there really isn't a wrong place to be, a poet kind of goes with anything, any kind of decor, indoor, out. Presidents like to have poets next to them, we're sort of like a speaking wreath, the kind of poet you pick tells the kind of president you are. The hell of dating or marrying a poet is that certainly we will write about you, so if you don't want to be seen, don't date a poet, anyone should know that. Because really a poet has nothing better to do than look at you. A poet's best friend is her dog, because instantly the dog will take the poet on walks, the poet is like the earth's shadow. The sun moves and the poet writes something down. I felt so happy to be invited here by the

class of '98 that I bought a new suit. I guess by now you've gotten the idea that I am your poet. So I feel good, and I look good and now I'd like to go a little further, simply doing my job.

The notion of leadership changes every few years. Right now we like to have a leader who we don't mind looking at, whose antics we may not approve of, but we know about. We like to know everything we can about our leaders today though we don't much respect their private lives. We're excited by a leader who likes to live publicly. I think we're living in a public moment and that's why poets need to come back. While we're all living on the outside we need someone living on the inside, to watch themselves and then us, to bring our inside out. Do you know what I mean? Our time needs a shadow. We know this, but we have to hear it too. I'll tell you about the history of this.

About 300 years ago there was a poet in New Spain which is what they called Mexico then and her name was Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz. I'm sure some of you have read her, have heard about her. The man who was her biographer, Octavio Paz, died just a couple of months ago. Anyway she was indeed the first poet of North America, even before Ann Bradstreet, and she was world famous—a big library at that time in the world would have about 400 volumes and in that library would be her books, everyone in the world who read, read Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz. Now this is a poet who did not travel. In fact she didn't even go out. Her work did, of course. She lived inside a convent in Mexico City and because she was friends with a great many powerful people in the church and the government she would be invited to write the important poems commemorating the events of her time. To do that public thing.

I bought a refrigerator the other day, the first refrigerator I have ever bought in my life and the man in the store, Gringer's on First Avenue, asked me what I do and I said I'm a poet. Let's hear one he said. I balked, maybe feeling a little cheesy, you know like I should entertain him while I'm buying a refrigerator, like those cab drivers or waiters who flirt with women while they work, so that you're reminded that you're never really a customer, you're always just a woman, or a poet. I recited one—not well—I kind of stuttered. It was short. He looked at me blankly. Do you want to hear it again, I asked. No. I think that one went over my head he said, and turned his attention to the next customer.

When a new leader, a new Viceroy arrived in New Spain, the local government would commission a ceremonial arch and the Viceroy and his wife would pass under it with much fanfare. Think about that when you look at arches, that they describe important moments, that someone commissioned someone else to make them, that supposedly an arch celebrates an important moment, that someone passes through. The greatest sculptor would design the arch usually with images of Poseidon, and cherubim, and vanquished Indians, and beautiful



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women, whatever was chic, and the poet would write a poem to be read as the procession of glorious new people would walk under, going from this moment to that, it's a history you can see, like what we're doing today.

Most poets teach, I do, and school just ended everywhere in the world, and towards the end of the semester, I find myself getting continually more kind of woo woo and risky, wanting to go out into the world with my writing class, mostly I've already told them everything I know and I wanted us to have an experience together so we went to see some art, we took a trip up to 112th street, to John the Divine. Inside one of the small chapels that line the cathedral walls there's an installation by the video artist Bill Viola. It's a triptych and though the contents of his piece are extremely obvious, they really work. The first panel is a woman giving birth. A youngish, maybe early 30s, white woman who is cradled between her husband's open legs. It looks like the ideal birth—both of the people are calm and beautiful and there are midwives hovering, and the tape is clearly edited, but we get the whole experience. The infant's head is pushing out from between the beautiful suffering young woman's legs, the middle triptych is a man floating underwater. It might be Bill Viola, he's wearing a flowing robe and there's a wire that he's dangled on and the robe is rippling and it might be anyone, some lonely baby in the middle of his life—hopelessly connected and submerged in "it," whatever the substance is, and clearly alone. The final panel is an old woman on a life support system and she finally dies. Turns out it's Bill Viola's mother. The entire cycle lasts 30 minutes. I found myself sobbing at the moment of the birth. It was so riveting, I knew I was going to do it, I've been crying all over the place lately, and this was such a good cry, the cry of birth.

Later we sat in a little garden outside the cathedral. It was a class after all, and isn't this the definition of academy—a grove of trees? We sat around another sculpture, a big sunflower and we talked about Bill Viola and the Walter Benjamin essay I had asked them to read for today and it was really perfect, because the essay was "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" and here we have birth and videotape in a church—all of us were enjoying each other's intelligence and the nice weather and then a beautiful peacock stepped into our midst, a real one and it sprayed open its feathers, hundreds of eyes like old teevee. "CBS," I told them, and then we got on the train downtown. I rode downtown with two students, Allison and Tanya and they told me about the altar of the church which I hadn't looked at, and how there was a great man for each century, and the spot for the 20th century was empty, and also it was the final century so how can that spot be filled? It was so ominous. We had a moment of silence for the 20th century. I suggested Gandhi, Gandhi's great, we agreed. But if the 20th century is the final spot on the altar, shouldn't it be the gateway to all other centuries, not just the last. And what great person could do that. We

couldn't think of any great women—great in the right way. There's Mother Theresa and Gertrude Stein, and we discussed the scandals in these women's lives. I suggested the woman giving birth. It's just a great act, that great act makes all the other ones possible, it's an act of allowing, of not destroying, of giving, letting life pass through, and I thought I should bring this to you—what a frightening thought, a woman's body being the archway to the future—and as we stand here, and some of you will be giving birth, or being there, and holding her, and some of you have already done this, and here are your kids, they sit in their seats today, graduating from college. This is greatness, to pass through and know, to know that it's happening to you, to be awake at the moment of birth.

A friend of mine, Susie, is a death penalty lawyer. I guess I should be frank with you. You may or may not have been obsessed with graduating from college this spring. But I have. When you invite a poet, you are inviting someone who is obsessed with you, who has nothing better to do, who wants to be your arch, I do weddings and funerals. In 1992 I ran for president. It was the right thing to do with that year. So all spring while you have been thinking about graduation, or not at all, I've been gathering things for you. I wondered who you were, I saw the moment of birth at the cathedral and I thought that would be great for the class of '98, I was in Hawaii this spring, I was invited there to do a reading and a talk and I was taken for walks in the national park and I saw the form of worship they have there, you will see in holy places in Hawaii a pile of rocks, it's called a *heiau* and it simply notates a holy place, three or four rocks, sometimes a flower and a toy, a can of pop, and no one disturbs these piles, it's a site of worship.

I gave a talk at the University of Hawaii called "How to Write a Poem," and I guess in my illustration, I was unwittingly doing the same thing, telling them that the poem could just be a pile of things, for instance—and I grabbed a young man's can of juice, I mean I asked, I said, could I have this for a moment, he said sure, and I said that the poem could be like "red chair, can of Hawaiian Punch, man's leg"—that whatever's next to each other counts, the assemblage makes the truth, the truth of the poem. I met that young man later at a reading and he told me that he liked my talk very much, but there was one problem. You never gave me my juice back. I looked at him. I was thirsty, he said.

All spring I've been gathering the most important things I can think of and putting them together. When I was a child I would take these long walks, before I could write, before I had language and I would come home and my mother would say empty your pockets. And there was my poem: a piece of bright glass, a stone. A little piece of wood. Susie is a death penalty lawyer and when I told her I was coming to talk at your graduation she said I think this would be interesting to you. We went to the Supreme Court in Brooklyn last week. We are all sitting in our seats. Here's the courtroom. Over there is the jury. A few white people,



mostly Black and Hispanic, the courtroom is so small. Susie said that's bad. The jury is right on top of the prosecution. The DA is a woman, named Heidi, she looked familiar, we made eye contact right away. She's very smart, the judge is female, white. I don't know what happened to her, says Susie. She has no patience, watch her. Our client is going to fry, if she has her way. I'm sitting on the left. I'm sitting with Susie (who is Hispanic), and the defense. Mostly, we're all white. On the right side of the courtroom, I mean on the prosecution side is the family, the relatives, mother, brothers of the people who died, the massacred, the victims, the slain.

Here's the story. Darryl Harris, a young African American man the one sitting right in front of us in the courtroom, he worked at Rikers, a New York City prison for many years, he was a

ing horror of how one of us can, has, Darryl Harris has eradicated five other people's lives, and here are their families to my left and there is the jury peering around, guilty themselves, there is the judge in her white hair. Often the defense and the judge and the prosecution have to get up and go into the judge's chambers and say something that the jury can't hear, and Darryl Harris sits there alone at a long table and he's wearing a green sweater, and he's a handsome man, he looks sweet, I kind of want to touch his head and forgive him, because the horror of all this is that everything has happened already, every horrible thing has already happened, that is the truth and now we have to decide whether we should destroy Darryl Harris, who lost his mind one night, and though he is a man in a green sweater, with a teeny gold earring in his

I woke up out of a dream the other night. I don't know what's going to happen to the class of 1998, but I'm happy to be alive with you. That's what I thought. I had this dream. I have to tell you about it. There was a caravan of beetles crossing the floor of the room I sleep in. They streamed over my dog's bowl which was on the floor. And I started hearing a song, not the words, just the music. It was the "Star Spangled Banner" and suddenly I was remembering late night teevee in the '60s and we would see caravans of men on camels crossing a desert, and then jet planes would soar over a mosque and we'd hear that song, and it was scary that before the teevee went out in America the station needed to say that we ruled the world. It gave my brother and I a chill. And then we went to bed. My dream just made me laugh and laugh,



hero, he saved at least one man's life in a prison riot and was decorated by the City of New York, he began to smoke crack cocaine and eventually he lost his job and then worked as a security guard for a while, and lost that job too from smoking dope, and one night last year he was hanging out in a social club, Club Happiness, in Brooklyn. Darryl Harris flipped. No one denies that. He shot four men he knew in the back of their heads. He made them lie down. The young DA in the green suit questions the detective who came to the scene of the crime that December morning and counted the bodies and the detective helped the DA create an overhead drawing, a diagram of the social club and now the DA questions him. Did you see a pack of Newports on the bar? Yes. Can you point to that place on the drawing? Did you see a white baseball cap? Yes. One woman was slain. She watched the deaths of all the others, she begged for her life, she had five children, and he chased her, there was a struggle, he repeatedly stabbed her, and her body was found outside by the detective, he was directed to her body by a homeless man, she was lying on an abandoned mattress outside the club. Is this photograph accurate the DA asked. Yes. And later you identified her in the morgue.

It is so emotional the courtroom scene. Clearly we are being brought through this scene step by step so we will feel horror, slow creep-

ear, looking strong, looking vulnerable, murderer, even looking sad, laughing softly for a moment with his lawyer, clearly we should put him down. He did something incredibly wrong, and this courtroom scene is tense, is a frozen greasy portrait of his life, probably the end of it. But the drawing was how we "got" the emotional scene, oddly. It all came true, when they pinned it to the wall. Then we had a plan, a layout. The man I spoke to in the hall agreed. He's a *New Yorker* writer. Do you come to a lot of these? No, he smiles. It's an important case. That drawing was amazing, he agrees. It quickens it. Not exactly art, but an order. It says that we must be here.

Where are we now? I don't want that man to die. Do you? It made me want to be a lawyer, I thought I've done everything wrong, I want to go back, to go to law school, to take part in this rite of confusion and justice and race and narrative and drugs. Of family, and language, and truth. Awkward parts of it, life. But I won't go back. Because I've got something to write. I can finish this. The trial will end. I hope that Darryl won't die. Not because he's good, but because he's alive. I wanted to drag every little thing I could think of this spring onto this platform with me, because birth is great and then it ends, the little head of the person becomes part of the world, with her weakness and her privilege, and the first grass of her life.

that beetles in my apartment could mean the same thing, and I wasn't alone, I told it to you and she listened to me.

I hope you all find yourselves sleeping with someone you love, maybe not all of the time, but a lot of the time. The touch of a foot in the night is sincere. I hope you like your work, I hope there's mystery and poetry in your life—not even poems, but patterns. I hope you can see them. Often these patterns will wake you up, and you will know that you are alive, again and again.

*Eileen Myles is a poet, art writer, and novelist who lives in New York and Provincetown. Her books include School of Fish, Maxfield Parrish, Chelsea Girls, and Not Me. Myles received a standing ovation upon delivering this address, yet many students were infuriated. "That's success," she says. Of her life as a poet she adds, "I am a proponent of the American avant-garde tradition that writes in what Williams called 'the variable foot,' meaning daily American speech rhythms."*

BILL VIOLA, NANTES TRIPTYCH, 1992  
VIDEO/SOUND INSTALLATION  
PHOTO: MUSÉE DES BEAUX-ARTS DE NANTES

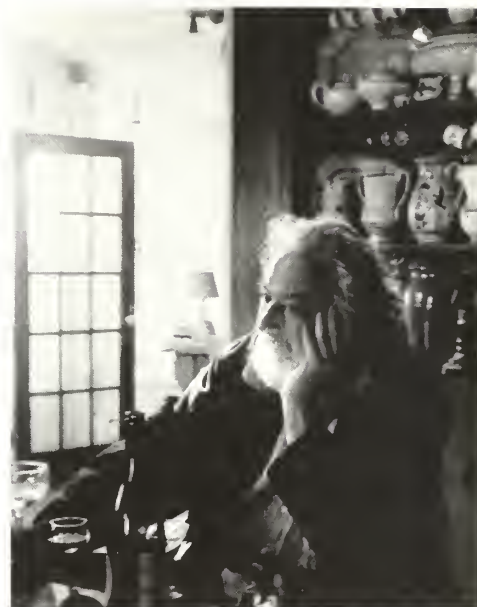




STANLEY KUNITZ, RIVERDALE, NY, 1995



PAUL BOWEN, PROVINCETOWN, 1994



PAUL RESIKA, PROVINCETOWN, 1995

## Renate Ponsold: Facing the Artist

by Jennifer Liese

Translated from Latin, *renate* means "re-born." Whether through prescience or prophecy, Renate Ponsold was aptly named. Her portraits—of painters, musicians, poets, playwrights, the occasional actor—project such empathy that, on a dreamy day, one must wonder whether the photographer has spent her past lives in so many creative incarnations. On a day more grounded, one might at least consider that, at the "click," Ponsold momentarily slips under her subject's skin—so deep and easy is the revelation of character.

As a student at the Bavarian State School of Photography in the late 1950s, Ponsold shouldered past crowds to snap Louis Armstrong in full grin. Soon after, she arrived in New York City, landed a job documenting MoMA's collection, and joined the swirl of the 1960s art world,

Hasselblad always in hand. During her 40-odd years of photographing in studios and backyards from New York to Paris to Provincetown, Ponsold has gravitated almost exclusively toward artists. In his "Afterword" to her book, *Eye to Eye: the Camera Remembers*, Renate's late husband, the painter Robert Motherwell, observes, "She can listen to poets, composers, painters, and sculptors endlessly and with complete comprehension, because she herself is wholly creative, not only in photography but in everything."

The breadth of Ponsold's appreciation finds roots in her childhood. Growing up in Germany, Ponsold was led by her father to every possible cultural event—to see Furtwängler conduct, Yehudi Menuhin play Bach, and Ulanova dance the dying swan in *Swan Lake*. One Christmas night, she remembers, they had the rare experience of hearing Benedictine monks sing Gregorian chants in their candlelit Romanesque

monastery. As a teenager in Münster, she went to see old French movies every Monday night. "Poetry, film, music, theater—they were all connected for me," she says, "and the interests awakened through early exposure only intensified."

Of the arts, Ponsold speaks breathlessly and with contagious high spirit. Over dinner this spring, she recalled Menuhin's virtuosity and said that his recent passing saddened her, for the loss of his gift and because his is a face—"of rare inner and outer beauty"—she had always wished to photograph. She remembered having empty pockets upon moving to New York, but feeling enriched by the culture surrounding her everywhere, particularly on visits to the Met or the Frick to see Holbein, Goya, or Delacroix. Ponsold's enjoyment does not end with arts proper. She is a devout lover of culinary pleasures and can get passionate when watching a high-level tennis match. Recalling a trip to Spain

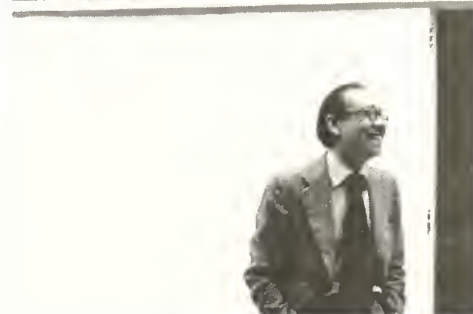




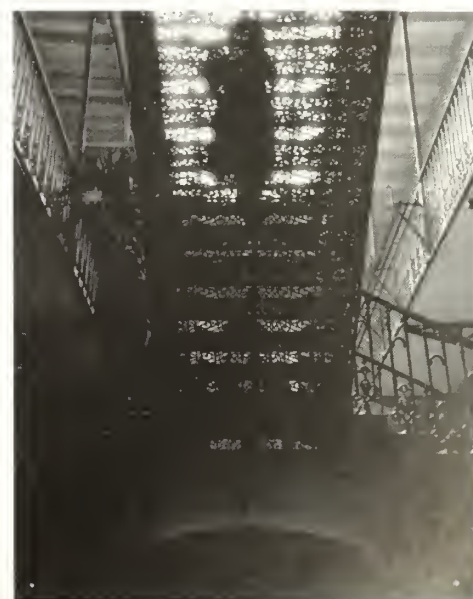
ELISE ASHER, PROVINCETOWN, 1980



ROBERT HUGHES AND SON, PROVINCETOWN, 1974



ROBERT MOTHERWELL, GREENWICH, CT, 1972  
ANDY WARHOL, NEW YORK CITY, 1978  
I.M. PEI, SALISBURY, CT, 1979



STAIRWAY, MEXICO CITY, 1961

in 1966, she describes how mistral winds toppled a truck loaded high with oranges, sending thousands of them down a vast gray-green olive tree grove, and confides, "That's one time I wish I made color photographs, for only a color photograph could have captured that visual sensation."

Whether talking of yesterday or 30 years ago, Ponsold's rather astounding recollection of detail—both physical and psychological—comes through in every observation. This is a feat not so much of memory, it seems, but the result of intense relish of sense and sensibility in the first instance. And it is this relish, this state of vital receptiveness, that makes for such extraordinary photographs, allowing her to see the familiar, the unexpected, and always the essential. Look, for instance, at Paul Bowen, his eyes at once hung with Welsh melancholy and buoyed by raised brows, or Paul Resika, his usual strapping force muted with wistfulness. In portraits of Robert Hughes flaunting a big fish, and Elise Asher glowing like the verdant leaves of her garden, she bestows perfect fusions of character and atmosphere.

Ponsold knows faces. She pronounces little bits of sage wisdom, things the rest of us might not notice, like, "Oftentimes, people with short teeth look permanently young." She is especially a connoisseur of artists' faces, which, she says, tend to differ from those of businessmen. She and Motherwell shared a speculation—"artists, when they grow old, look half male, half female"—a result of their possessing and later manifesting attributes of both genders.

As is the fate of many portrait photographers, Ponsold often finds her work appreciated more for its subject matter than its photographic quality. She has been called a "diarist," a "witness" of an era, an "archivist." She is distinguished from photographers such as Hans Namuth and Arnold Newman, who focused on many of the same subjects, by her shunning of props, artificial light, and the studied pose, her seeming renunciation of a "personal stamp." And while it is true,

Ponsold says, that she tries to be "as unobtrusive as possible," the stamp, however subtle, is deeply imprinted. "In the darkroom, I see the photograph in more abstract terms—cropping depends on dark and light shapes because I have to judge from the negative," she says. Ponsold's affinity for abstract painting is evident in her work. Blur your eyes a bit and you'll see the "all-overmess" in the portrait of Motherwell by the pond, the intense contrast of a window-lit Warhol, split from darkness by the hard edge of a column, the float and motion of I.M. Pei against a blazing white wall.

Perhaps to see these formal qualities, we must efface the faces, which, so deeply associative, tend to overwhelm the critical eye. Ponsold also photographs city scenes and what she calls "lonely landscapes." The best of these images, undeservedly little-known, share an aesthetic with modernist masters like Henri Cartier-Bresson, Helen Levitt, and Alexander Rodchenko. In a photograph taken in Mexico in 1961, an anonymous form punctuates the frame and we can't help but see a shadow breaking the lacy dappling of light.

I once listened as Gilles Peress, an artist who photographs in countries torn by civil war, explained (as I remember it) that he chose photography as his medium not for the sake of it, but because it best described a fundamental dilemma of humanity—violence of brother against brother. He said if ever he found another medium that would speak more eloquently of this condition, he would take it up. This, I thought, was a radical statement. I'd always presumed that an artist chose first the medium, then the message—one is a painter or a musician, then paints or plays one's own truth. Instead the reverse can be the case—one has a truth and finds the ideal form through which to express it. For Renate Ponsold the instantly responsive camera seems the consummate way to absorb, and to make reborn, the tumult of creation.

*Jennifer Liese is the editor of Provincetown Arts.*

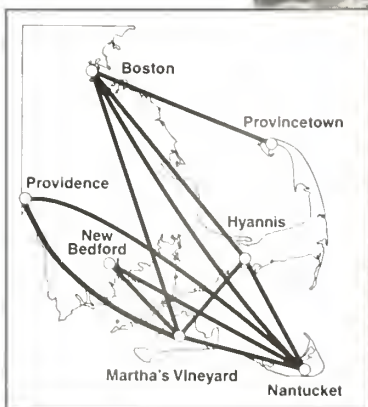


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by Paul Lisicky

The crowd throbs, raucous and agitated, heat wafting off bare muscles. Bicycles with bells, pedestrians, roller bladers, gym boys, baby carriages—the street's a pachinko game; we weave in and out of each other, miraculously avoiding collision. Though it's an Indian summer weekend on Commercial Street, it might as well be July—at least *my* idea of July. "You think this is intense," says my friend, Hollis, "wait till you see the real summer." Someone crushes the back of my shoe. "Hey," I say, annoyed, but the stranger's already out of earshot. On the wharf-side of the street there's a red rectangle in the window: SUMMER BLOWOUT. People stream from the store with flushed faces and plump shopping bags, and like the good gay boys we are, we're lurching toward the door.

"What about this?" I'm holding a horizontally-striped, olive-gray sweater to my face.

"Nn nn." Hollis says, shaking his head. "That J.Crew thing's not going to work here."

I must look wounded, though I try to hold the smile on my face. It's not that I feel any particular allegiance to my old life; still, it's disconcerting that there's so much I don't *know*. Only

last week I slept with a certain houseboy after he biked up to me on the street. When I casually mentioned this to someone the next day, he looked at me as if I'd snacked on a slice of lunch meat off the sidewalk. "You had sex with *him*? You're better than that."

"Listen," Hollis says, more softly now, squeezing my shoulder. "You're a spring. Not a summer. *I'm* a summer." He rifles through the overstuffed rack and hands me something meager. "Try this on."

I put on an absurdly tight Tom of Finland tank top over my button down and try to imagine visiting my parents in it. (*Uhh*, says my mother, clutching her collar, crumbling to the floor.) I put it back. I've been in town but two weeks, since October 1st, and already it seems that half the populace has participated in my makeover. My friend Billy has accompanied me to the optician in Orleans, where he's tried to persuade me to buy lipstick-red frames, which I almost assent to (does he want them for himself?), until I choose a more sensible tortoise-shell pair. My friend Jimmy has already shorn off the hair on the sides of my head, leaving the dark, foppish



waves on top—a look that really seems to understand who I am, an aging boy who has one foot planted in his past, the other in the here and now. I can't help but wonder whether this kind of tutelage is part of any boy's welcome to town. Who, for instance, facilitated Hollis', Billy's, and Jimmy's welcomes, their respective entries into the frat? And who before them?

I couldn't be more grateful for my new friends. Certainly, they want to see me flourish and thrive. Certainly, they must get that I'm hungry to slough off my old skins, that I've had enough of being a good boy, so desperate to please. They must know that I need to be a little bad before it's too late.

"What did you get?" I say to Hollis outside the store.

He holds up a cluster of socks—mustard-green, graphite, cadmium yellow—like some mad bouquet while I show off my new polo shirt.

"Paul," he says, eyes rolling.

"What?"

Instantly he takes the shirt from me and rips off each sleeve in two expert tears. He hands it back to me. I don't know whether to thank him or to weep.

"Now that's a Provincetown shirt."

•

It comes in like a white speck on the water. Then something with more dimension: a wedding cake; an igloo; a string of white boxes, in descending order, hooked together on a floating raft. It's the last arriving ferry of the season. I stand on the town beach, heralding its arrival. I wave stupidly, then dip my hand in the harbor. On this fine, fair Columbus Day morning, the water's freezing, cold enough to scald.

I step through the kelp on the shoreline. The smell of the water, the tolling of church bell and foghorn: How intricately lovely the world seems, how precise and expansive. Who knew what I'd been holding back? I see things more deeply; clouds tower; even the pale pink roses outside Billy's apartment window seem to vibrate. I've already written 30 pages of a new novel; I've already made more friends in two weeks at the Fine Arts Work Center than I'd made in the past 10 years. My shoulders ease backward; I hold my head higher as I walk into yet another party. I speak more fluently, expressively, not afraid to display my silly side, the cast of selves I've kept expertly hidden for too long. One minute I'm the "Sissy Priest," the next I'm a comic strip character. "Fancy Boy," the next I'm devising theme nights for a fictitious night club: *Lola Falana! Jack Wrangler! Star Boy in Flames!*

And yet?

Why is love still missing from my life? Of course I haven't been in town all that long, but I don't understand why I haven't been asked out. And why is it that every time I ask someone out, he only seems to be interested in fooling around? Not that I have anything against sex (by God, no), but I'm frustrated that the boys I've slept with don't seem to be much interested in anything more. While we certainly say hello to

each other on the street the next day, it's all a bit casual. I think, if it was good that time, well, wouldn't it even be better the next? My hints at further explorations seem to be appreciated but it stops at that. Is there something wrong with me? Is it the way I smell, the energy I give off, something written into my body chemistry that eludes me? I wake up in the morning, groggy, a bar of sunlight blinding my eyes, feeling hope—what will happen today?—before the melancholy settles: dust beaten from a mop. If only someone's face were on the pillow next to mine. If only to watch another man sleeping, his mouth twitching as he dreams.

I am 31 years old. Do I already sense my future creeping up on me: the narrow bed and the crock pot, the smell of cooked cabbage wafting up from the apartment below?

I certainly can't live in Provincetown forever.

I try not to fret. Maybe it's just that what I want is too specific and my desire is caving in on itself, the roof of my soul buckling under that weight. Or maybe it's this place: maybe there's no point in being coupled if there's so much fresh "talent," as Hollis calls it, roaming into town every week. Still, I'm not ready to let go. That night, I walk into Gallerani's with my friend, Polly, and see two handsome men, obviously a couple, sitting along the opposite wall of the restaurant. Their faces are underlit by the candle between them. One reaches across the table for the other's hand, and in that easy, intimate gesture, I know everything I need to know about them. We're not talking hearts and flowers here, something easily idealized, but something earthier and sexier than that. I just know: you can see it in their eyes.

"Who are they?"

"That's Mark and Wally," says Polly. "Shall we go over and talk to them?"

"No, don't bother." I stay seated in my booth, stopping her. "They're so sweet together."

The food is brought to the table. I lift my wine glass to my lips. And Polly reaches over to touch my hand, as if she realizes that I can see suddenly, in the deepest sense, what I've been missing.

•

I decide to be practical. Billy has already indicated an interest in joining the gym with me. He's been spending far too much time inside, he says, and his doctor thinks working out would be good for his health. So one day, after squeezing my paltry bicep before the medicine-cabinet mirror, I give him a call: "Let's do it." If I cannot find a boyfriend, then I certainly should be able to control other aspects of my life.

Yet joining the gym is a bigger commitment than I think it is. It entails entering into a complex relationship with the body in which nothing is ever good enough, in which one's always examining what's *lacking*. Am I ready for this intensified scrutiny? Doesn't my body already take up far too much of my attention?

We sign up at Betty's. Though Billy's promised to suggest a program for me (he's worked out at other times in his life), he immediately

wanders off toward the free weight area, leaving me on the floor like a seventh-grade girl with braces and glasses who's just been publicly dumped at the junior high canteen.

"What should I do?" I call out.

"Try the leg machine."

Well, thank *you*, Mr. Forlenza. I plop onto some Frankensteinian contraption then lift my legs feebly. Dumbbells thump and chime; everyone's focused; everyone seems to know exactly what he's doing. Unlike me, who's too ashamed to let anyone see how inept I am. It's one thing to look like a big old sissy among straight boys, quite another to accomplish that among men you want to look sexy for.

"What are you doing?"

Is that man with the thick, blue-black hair talking to *me*? I swallow hard.

He steps toward me. "You're cheating. Make sure you squeeze your legs at the top. Go for the full range of motion. There, there, that's right." And he stands beside me as I execute a perfect rep.

There's something lulling about the authority of his voice. I can't help but be drawn to its parental quality: that conflation of concern and control. I'm partly flattered, partly offended: who asked for his help? I let him watch me. Without my realizing it, his face (half hard: mouth, brow; half soft: eyes, nostrils) imprints itself in my consciousness like a deer print in clay.

"I have to go, honey," says Billy, huffing, his hand to his chest. "I'm exhausted."

"Are you okay?" But he's already out the door, hurrying down the street to his apartment.

•

The doorman's a big black fellow in a floor-length duster and a red, rubbery hat with points like a jester's crown. He makes me think of an oversized, overage Little Rascal. If only he were so charming, though. Does he grimace at everyone else the way he seems to grimace at me? He seems to take particular offense at my desire to be admitted into the A-House for free. Five dollars, he barks. But aren't all Work Center fellows allowed in for free? I squeak. Five dollars, he says, more softly now, jabbing his finger at my chest. I fork over my cash, hurrying past him, a little pissed, but still hoping that one day soon I'll be recognized by him as the Townie I truly am.

I've worked hard all week on a book that makes me deeply uncomfortable, if only because I'm writing about things I'd rather avoid *feeling*. I've been waiting for this night the whole week. I order a Rolling Rock from Ken, the bartender, and practically shotgun it. The voices around me are booming, baritone. The boys are standing around the postage stamp of a dance floor, heads nodding to the beat, clutching their bottles to their chests or belts. The fireplace is roasting the room. Everyone's waiting for something to happen. I'm feeling all loose and woozy, as if the beer has dripped down into the emptied cave of my stomach, warming the last vestiges of autumn chill. I stroll onto the floor. Perhaps I'm

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lucky that my eyesight's so poor, that I'm still wearing the same pair of gummy, protein-coated contacts I've had for the past three years; otherwise, I'd feel self-conscious if I could see those faces looking back at me. But my body feels right tonight, that pleasant combination of tensile and supple. I'm ready for trouble. I chug my arms and shimmy, focusing on the bass line rumbling the floorboards.

I raise my head. I'm shocked to see that the man from the gym is dancing not two feet from me, his palms facing outward at his collar bone, eyes closed. His grin is sly, the left corner of his mouth turning upward. For the first time I'm seeing how muscular his body is, how thick across the chest, and for the first time I'm seeing that he's attracted to me, which quickens my heart, in part because I hadn't foreseen it. (*Me?* What would he want with *me?*) He grasps my hand, drags me off the floor, and buys me another beer. It's too loud to talk. He puts his lips to my ear, says something about the boy to our left, and I laugh, pretending to understand every word, though all I can think of right now is the warmth and weight of his shoulder through his sweat-drenched T-shirt, its dense, meaty quality.

"Let's get out of here," he says finally with a controlled triumph. As we walk past the boys at the bar, I try to maintain a look of cool composure. My pulse is beating inside my back teeth. I tell myself: Of course, *of course*.

To this day I can't even recall the route to this house: did we walk, ride bicycles? Was it cloudy, or did the moon silver the harbor? All I know is that we're standing inside his living room. He latches his fingers together, stretches his arms overhead, and to his shock, I tear up his shirt out of his waistband and fix my mouth to his left nipple. "Oh, Jesus," he says, as his knees weaken.

Soon enough I'm leading him to *his* bed (how sexy, how profound this feels!), just the way he led me off the dance floor. We lie down for a minute, still, a little shy, then all at once we're on each other, thrashing, voracious. He lifts his face from mine after a while. "That's one fierce mouth on you, boy," he laughs.

I lick my way down to his tight, tight stomach. I am hungry for forgetfulness, greedy to be an animal.

I'm still awake at four-thirty in the morning. The bedroom is too cold, the floodlights outside shine through the blinds, throwing slatted patterns on the ceiling. G. sleeps beside me, absolutely calm and contained, snoring delicately. What is it about me when I have sex with someone I'm excited about? Why can't I sleep afterward? Why do I feel this lump in my throat like I'm about to have a heart attack, but a satisfying heart attack?

"I have to kick you out," says G. affectionately.

Sunlight pools on the floor. As I focus, G.'s face is just inches above my own, the tiniest thread of spit jewelizing the space between his open lips. "What time is it?"

"It's ten," he says, glancing at his watch. "You have to leave before my boyfriend gets home."

A blankness in my gut. I sniff. I almost say it: *Boyfriend?*

His voice is calm and rational as he explains the situation to me, how he and his boyfriend of six years spend one night apart each week to sleep with other people, even though they're deeply devoted to each other. The sincere expression in his eyes suggests that he doesn't think he's hurting me and that there's no reason in the world why I should be offended. Still, I wish I'd had access to this news a little earlier. I'm peeved. And yet it would seem indelicate to express such feelings, akin to bringing a beer can to the table at a fancy dinner party.

I step into my jeans as expertly as I can.

"Well, bye," I say, extending my hand at the door.

A tinge of sorrow flickers in his eyes (they're the color of tea leaves in this light), as he pulls me close to him. His hug is tight, unguarded. His shirt collar smells of fabric softener. "I had a wonderful time," he says.

A branch cracks outside. "Me too."

I walk home. Sunlight shines on the shards of a broken Coke bottle by the street.

Danella thinks it's time to lie low. We're in her Work Center apartment with its knotty-pine paneling, its sweltering fireplace. She's stirring the contents of an enormous pot, preparing one of her low-fat soul food recipes she's trying out on me. (A dud of a cook, I couldn't be more grateful.) She's on vacation from men after having ended a long, exhausting relationship. This hard-won detachment gives her a special assurance, a self-effacing, Zen-like wisdom. We adore each other like brother and sister. (She calls us Laurel and Hard-on.) I walk over to the stereo and put on our favorite music of the day: first de la Soul, then Queen Latifah. Before long we're moving our arms, dancing casually around her apartment. I've never been at such ease with my body, and it pleasures me no end that she doesn't make fun of my white boy moves. Later, slouching on her bed, we'll watch John Waters' *Desperate Living* until we laugh so hard that the tears run hot down our cheeks.

For now, we sit down to eat. The greens are fabulous: zesty, spiked with lemon and garlic, bells on the tongue. Once again, I'm talking about my lovelorn-ness, a topic which must tire the patience of even the best of my friends.

"You're kicking and fighting," she says.

I lift my head. Do I detect the slightest hint of impatience in her voice?

She salts her corn, takes a spoonful, then cocks her head. She salts it again. "You're going to get what you want, honey. But you can't force it. It will come to you." She has a way of investing these expressions with such freshness. But why am I so unwilling to have faith?

"There's not very much time."

"You're young," she insists.

But then a tender recognition settles inside her gaze. We've just been talking about how



many people are sick in town, how so many of them are not going to make it through the winter. Even her beloved younger brother has been in and out of hospitals for years. Could this be one of the reasons why she loves me so much?

"Eat." And she spoons another helping of greens onto my plate.

The tide advances on the town beach outside the gym's sliding glass windows, foam swirling around the boats' rusted red hulls. It's twilight. A northeaster's ganging up on the coast; ions rush and tumble through the atmosphere. Yet everything's safe inside this little corner: no water seeping under the sill. There's Polly, leaning on the Roman chair. There's Hollis, by the window, doing his shoulder shrugs. There's Tim Callis, who's just passed a homemade cassette of dance music—"Butt Party"—to S., the woman behind the counter. There's Michael Cunningham, up from New York; there's Jack Pierson; there's Ryan Landry—all the people I'm fond of, the inimitable combination of souls who give town its peculiar vitality and panache. Unfortunately, Billy's stopped coming: I can't tell whether he isn't feeling well or whether he's lost interest.

I'm much more committed to working out than I'd ever expected. On my better days I'm convinced that I've actually remade my entire body (look: a blue ropey vein's popped out on my bicep!), and when I tell my friend Elizabeth, whom I haven't seen since grad school, that she might not recognize me when she comes to town, she kids me about it mercilessly. Of course, it probably helps that I've shaved off my hair and grown a goatee, which gives me a certain Luciferian quality.

We're all engaged in our reps and our sets when S., the woman behind the counter, switches off "Butt Party." She claps her hands like a drill sergeant. "All right," she bellows. "Who in this gym smells?"

We're silent. The room positively vibrates with collective shame. She has tapped into our deepest dreads. *It's me*, each one of us thinks, our stomachs shivering inside.

Then a few of us start snickering, nervously, quietly, expelling air through our nostrils. Immediately, S. herself seems to realize how extravagant and over-the-top her outburst was, how it expresses some lurid deep phobia. What rage has she kept bottled up inside? It probably makes it worse for her that no one's willing to back her up; all the shame in the room boomerangs on her. She crumples down in her seat. We might have stepped onto the set of *A Woman Under the Influence*.

The combination of the approaching storm and the complex energy in the room has my hair practically standing on end. *Is it you? Is it you?* Now everyone's wandering about the gym, sniffing, laughing. Arms are raised. We smell; we're smelled back. And all at once we're creating one of those quintessential Provincetown moments, something we'll remember for the rest of our lives, weirdly intimate, when people who'd

never spoken before are laughing together, bonding, fast becoming friends. All the while S. sits up front, moistening her lips, as if she's on the verge of tears.

On my way out I feel a tapping on my shoulder. It's G., who's slinging his gym bag over his shoulder.

"Did you just get here?" My voice sounds more authoritative than I'd intended.

"Can you believe her? Let's all buy a can of Renuzit." We're standing outside in the howling wind, leaves rasping around our feet. Like me, he, too, is caught up in the spirit of camaraderie and happy feelings. He lifts his head. A door swings open inside me. In the porch light his eyes smile and gleam with just the right hint of wickedness. "Your place or mine?" he says.

I grab for his hand. Where is death tonight? The world couldn't be more achingly beautiful; the sky glows beneath the stark, thrashing trees.

And so it starts, the events that conspire to make love, or whatever this is, the center of your life. At first, you don't even realize how much of your attention it consumes. You still have a life, don't you? You still get up to brush your teeth and pour milk on your corn flakes. You still send off your student loan payment on the first of the month. And yet you jump when you hear the phone or a knock at the door—is it him? You keep yourself groomed at all times because you never know when the opportunity will arise. Worse, you don't leave town when your brother offers you a free plane ticket to Miami for fear that when you come back he'll have revised his feelings. You don't even insist on your right to see him because he tells you—quite cheerfully, in fact—the story of Renaldo and Bobby. The single Bobby, who's having an affair with the coupled Renaldo, has started to make some reasonable demands, and the way G. sees it, "That's going to kill things." The whole thing becomes more precious to you because it's provisional, forever on the verge of vanishing. You lacquer it the way an oyster lacquers a grain of sand: layer upon layer until it shines.

You're walking down Commercial Street. You're thinking about his wavy, blue-black hair when you see him in a group of people standing outside Cafe Express. Your steps quicken. He's happy to see you, and you him, but when you talk you can feel a tension, the possibility of sex beating beneath everything: should we do it? Are all the conditions right? In public, you carry on something resembling a friendship, but you wonder whether the others know what's going on between you. You *hope* they can see it in both your eyes, for at the very least it will prove to you that there's something real between you, that it's more than just sex, which is all G. thinks it is. Or so he says.

You look at his unchanging gaze sometimes. Is he hiding something? How could he not be as torn-up as you are?

But in spite of the fact that the terms aren't equal here (he's unavailable a certain portion of the time; you're *always* available), you must ad-

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Now if only you could sit at your desk for more than five minutes at a stretch. Your new novel has come to naught. You stare out the window, then get up to pee. You stare again. You wonder whether you have Adult Attention Deficit Disorder.

You're standing outside the First Old Store one night when his boyfriend starts biking toward you. A valve in your heart flutters. Too late to run. You know you should probably be feeling guilty and contrite about what you've been doing (once is one thing; again and again is another), but you know he's probably doing the same thing himself with somebody else. And besides, you must confess that you feel some warmth toward the fellow. You talk about Alicia Henry's show of new paintings at the Work Center, which both of you happen to like very much. You talk about the music at the A-House. You look in his Nordic-blue eyes. You can see the edge of asperity in them. He knows; of course he does. You are breaking up the relationship. Still, this doesn't stop you from wanting to tear the flashing red light from his handlebars and stomp it to pieces.

Danella offers me a cup of Earl Grey as I sink into her sofa. Over in the barn there's a party still going on for a visiting writer. Things have been getting a little wild around the compound. Is it just the cold, the fact that there's nothing much else to do out here on the edge of the world besides our work, and we need to blow off some steam? Or is it simply that we trust each other? Within the last couple of weeks we've heard rumors of all sorts of innovative couplings: lesbians with straight boys, black girls with white boys, straight boys with gay boys—every possible combination you can imagine. Only last week, as part of a collaborative art project, Itty poured an assortment of canned foods from her cupboard over my naked body and photographed the results.

Sometimes, though, one needs to take refuge. Through the window I can hear Public Enemy's latest single drifting out across the parking lot.

"We haven't gotten together since last month," I say to Danella. "Do you think something's the matter?"

She's tossing carrots into her juicer, a thoughtful, sleepy expression on her face.



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"I mean, if things were really great between them, this wouldn't be happening. I can tell what he thinks when he sees me. It's just too much for him to take in right now."

The sleek machine makes a grinding noise before she switches it off. She will not proffer the easy answer, though she knows that's what I want from her. "Then why are you so worried?" She pushes the dreadlocks off her forehead and presses her hand against the small of her back. She sips from the carrot juice, which leaves a pale, creamsicle-colored mustache on her upper lip before she wipes it off. "If he's the one, he'll come to you."

"You mean I shouldn't try to bring this up?"

"Sit tight for now." She walks over to the sink and rinses out her stained glass. "Just trust me."

"But what if this is it?"

"It's not over, sweetheart."

I lift the cup. My tea burns the tip of my tongue.

I'm having a burst. I've been writing since dinner time, and now it's half past three in the morning. I've accumulated two chapters, 15 new pages of a novel. I think they're good, but who can tell such things when you're in the storm and fire of it? Whatever's transpired, though, I've had a conceptual breakthrough: my protagonist till now hasn't been active enough. He simply hasn't taken charge of his daily affairs; everything's been done *to* the poor guy: a baffled, inert observer. I want to shake him; I want to whack him upside the jaw. As soon as I make him *choose*, the stalled narrative takes off. He comes alive. The story sings for the moment, one unexpected event leading to the next.

Is my book trying to tell me something about myself?

I decide to sit tight. Outside my bedroom window the entire compound's dark, with the exception of Jim and Jane's window, in which a little lamp burns. I lay down on my spongy, narrow mattress. I think about what Danella told me, but her words don't stick. What's the worst that can happen? Am I only going to make an ass of myself? Or am I going to find out that he really doesn't care about me, that I simply don't have that much meaning for him? Well, if that's the case, then screw it.

I down cup after cup of coffee. I must have courage. I must keep hold of my convictions. I throw on my leather jacket, my scuffed Doc Martens, and a pair of torn 501s. I am walking down the stairs, walking out the door. The town couldn't be more beautiful this mild December night. A loose shutter bangs softly against a building. A white star fires, fizzling out over Long Point. The breadth and depth of it all. I shudder inside. And I couldn't be more pleased with myself, for I'm thinking, This is what it means to be an adult. This is what it means to throw off the yoke of childhood uncertainty: to be able to ask for what you want.

The lights are on in G.'s bedroom window. I creep up the driveway, careful not to make too much noise on the gravel. Music's playing in-

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side: is it Joni? "Same Situation." *Still I send up my prayer wondering where it had to go/with heaven full of astronauts and the Lord on death row.* I take a step further, sidle up against the car, and stop at the foot of the stairs. Voices. I clench. Not two inches from my shoes a skunk ambles by, white tail flaring. My mouth opens. My arms move frantically about as she wobbles away down the hedgerow, as scared of me as I am of her. Luckily, she keeps her scent to herself. I prop myself against the sideview mirror, practically falling to my knees. Then another step. Voices again. And this time I see them—G.'s, sitting in the hot tub, his arms wrapped around his boyfriend from behind. Steam hovers over the deck; the water bubbles. I think I should be angry, but it only feels like I've been punched and I'm numb. Their backs are pale and broad in the moonlight. G. nuzzles the bluish hollows behind his lover's shoulder blade; the leaves shiver, and that's enough. I see it all: the heft of their time together, their successes and missed opportunities, and suddenly I know why they're up this late: they've been talking about me, how they're going to move onward from here. Their eyes are closed. They're too caught up in the moment to notice the intruder standing on the deck.

I turn back down the steps. I wait till I'm far enough away from the house. I glance back over my shoulder, and this time I really do fall down on my knees. I stay there until it hurts, the gravel digging into my skin.

I shouldn't be surprised when G. tells me that he and his boyfriend have broken up. He tells me in the calmest, most workaday fashion, two years after I happened upon them in the pool. I've been involved with someone else, Eric, fresh from India by way of Montreal, and my attentions are too much turned toward him to feel anything like surprise. I suppose I'm still a little in love with G., but I've tossed that love aside, turned it inside out and lost it like a sock beneath a bureau. All over town, seemingly in-it-for-the-long-haul-relationships are falling apart. And much, much worse, people are dying. How many friends have we all lost over the last couple of years? It's 1993, the height of the Epidemic. Billy, Lon, Richard, David, Chico: even if they haven't died, they're getting sick. The medicine's lousy, the doctor's have thrown up their hands, and we all know it's only a matter of time. And now Wally—I've been looking in on him while Mark's away teaching—isn't doing so well. One night I walk by their house to see a clear-glass votive burning in the living room window. My stomach tightens.

A couple of days later, Eric and I are attending Wally's memorial service inside the UU church. I'm reasonably composed throughout. I'm holding Eric's hand, thinking of that scene back in Gallerani's, which seems like centuries ago, when I first saw Mark reach for Wally's hand across the table. Shyly, I walk up to hug Mark

after the service. He says, "Thank you for being in Wally's life," and immediately I burst into tears. I burrow my face into the soft part of his shoulder. I've come unglued, and I've never been so embarrassed. After all, what right do I have to this display in the face of Mark's pain? Why can't I stop? Still, he holds me tighter. Is it partly that I already miss my friend, the sweet, sweet fellow for whom I used to buy grapefruit gum when I came for my weekly visit? Is it partly that I'm porous, and I feel in the deepest part of my soul how utterly broken Mark is? Is it partly that I already sense that my relationship with Eric will end in a few months and I won't be able to save things, no matter how much I love him? That I'm sick and tired of so, so many deaths?

Could I already know that years in the future I'd find the love I was looking for, but it wouldn't happen without anguish, without someone being lost first?

Some days I'm shocked that so many of us are still standing. But here we are: a little battered, some days still a little unsteady on our feet, but walking, grateful for it. And who could have imagined that the story would turn out this way? Though Mark and I were probably the last ones to recognize it, Polly certainly saw it coming; so did Jenny and Dan. Lynda, who caught me on the street a few days after Wally's death (she herself would die in a car accident outside Plymouth in two months), hugged me, saying, "Watch out for Mark."

How would things have been different had we not started out in grief?

Oh, love in the new world.

Mark and I stand in our living room today, stepping back from the windows, waiting to see who takes what from our giveaway pile at the foot of the driveway. We've gathered so much over these past four years that sometimes it feels okay to let a few things go—not all, but a few. I'm ready to go back to my writing when I see a young man rifling through a milk crate full of my old shirts. He's new to town. He has that hungry look; it barely masks his vulnerability, the squint, the touch of trouble in his eyes. He picks up a shirt, chews on his lip. It might very well be the shirt from which Hollis tore off the sleeves all those years ago. The trees shake for a moment. The clouds part, sun bronzing the tips of the leaves. I want to tell him, go ahead. Yes. Instead, I lean inside Mark's embrace, sigh, watch the boy carry the shirt down the street.

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# Leaving Provincetown

by Oona Patrick

## Plowing Amid the Dunes

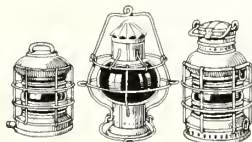
My parents met in a bar founded by a whaleman who gave up the sea. My mother tells me she had come to town for a summer to paint watercolors of dunes in the Provincetown light. She followed Route 6 all the way to the Atlantic, to Herring Cove, the highway's end (or beginning, I tell her, depending on the direction you face). Her convertible named Birdie broke down for good the day she arrived.

My mother left Washington, DC at the end of the 1950s. In the only photograph I've found of my parents from that time, they are at an opening at the former Chrysler Art Museum, now the Provincetown Heritage Museum. Once a church, the building had long been the first harbor landmark returning fishermen saw as they rounded Long Point, even after it lost its 100-foot spire in the Portland Gale.

In the photograph, my mother and father are standing on opposite sides of Ross Moffett's *Plowing Amid the Dunes*. My mother is wearing a short beige herringbone suit. Hidden in her purse, she has told me, is a pair of white Woodward & Lothrop gloves, which she had taken off as she approached the unexpectedly motley gathering inside the former church. Holding a varnish-yellow drink full of ice, she is looking at the camera, and my father, with a stubby black beard I've never seen in person, is looking at her.

I have a good idea of how my father came to be born in Provincetown—better, perhaps, than he has. Most of the Portuguese in town are descendants of the young men who fled conscription and poverty in the Azores, the Atlantis of our family's memory. They left at night on New England whaleships, then brought their families to Provincetown in the latter half of the 19th century. What strikes me about the Azores, from what little I can find about them in English, is the permanency of leaving them.

The Azores are not shallow-water reefs like some islands, but the peaks of undersea mountains and barely dormant volcanoes. Beyond their shores lies not the easy continental shelf I'm used to, but a sharp descent to ocean trenches. Something fallen off the edge of their land, someone sucked under a hull, a ship and crew gone down together, a bottle, a dead whale, drops a mile or more.



LINE DRAWINGS BY GHEE PATRICK, 1960s

## Marine Specialties

My parents make their living in a way I never felt I could follow. When they opened Marine Specialties, wrecking (beachcombing) became a sideline. They bought a World War II-era trap shed, left some of the fishing equipment hanging on the ceiling or in the rafters, and started paneling the room closest to the street with monkeywood from the beach. Further inside the store they raised two weathered wooden pillars, masts from unimaginably huge ships—fishing schooners or whaleships, ships hardly seen today. They brought them in from the beach and cut them down to fit under the metal roof. Before they opened, it was rumored that they would just be selling what they were finding on the beach.



ROBERT PATRICK BEACHCOMBING, 1965

I grew up in my parent's store, among army and navy surplus and the accumulating wreckage of marine industry. As a child I loved playing alone in the store's stockroom. I rolled tapped-out rope spools down the aisles like a 19th-century game of hoops.

Back then, our stockroom was as big as the store itself and built like an English garden maze. A square room framed only in chicken wire lay hidden in the center. It held the smallest or the most valuable merchandise: Air Force sunglasses, G.I. flashlights, little American flags, and close-out rhinestone shoe clips. Only occasionally padlocked, it was my secret room, like a giant model of the silver cricket cage I dreamed of

owning. I had no sense then of decline, of the true size of things around me.

In a newspaper article on the store, a reporter once remarked that, "Oona, eight, happily has taken an interest in retail." I could never tell what it meant. Had my father told him that, happily for him, I was interested in the business? Or had the reporter seen me so happily at work pricing the Filipino seashells? I always felt he'd gotten it wrong, either way.

When my brother was 12 and I was eight, he started salvaging too, finding things where it seemed to me there was nothing left of the bountiful wrecks our parents remembered. It seemed clear who would eventually run the store. He ordered a metal detector from the Sears catalog and brought it out on the beach. Watching the dials on the green metal box, he would sweep the flat, alien plate over the sand like a stethoscope over a motionless body. When the alarm sounded, it was my job to start digging with our mother's garden trowel. Like our parents, we would find coins, rings, and nameless lost things—the spoils of someone else's misfortune.

## Elegy for Dairy Land

"Provincetown, the Sahara of Cape Cod, where all the freehold property which nature ever gave her, if bid off at public sale, would hardly satisfy the auctioneer...in proportion to her population, is not only the wealthiest town upon the Cape, but in personal estate is, I think, the richest town in all the Commonwealth."

—Judge Scudder, 1851, quoted in *The Provincetown Book*, Nancy Smith, 1922

I wish to speak a word for Dairy Land now that it is gone. Every year, the first-graders at Veteran's Elementary took a field trip to the fish market beside the restaurant. There was something we were meant to learn in the back room. Alive under the surface, the lobsters were mottled blue, green, and gray against the Day-Glo turquoise of a tank fed by garden hoses. We learned how they were kept in cool aerated brine, carefully controlled to mimic seawater. That way they wouldn't die before being sold. The back room, we saw, was somehow both a nursery and a butcher shop.

The grizzled man in red plaid worked the blue bands off the lobsters' claws in a demonstration of their strength, or maybe his own. The son of the police chief, the heir to Mead's Plumbing Supply, and the innkeeper's eldest boy slyly dipped their pink fingers into the tank. The man filleted a flounder while we watched. After ex-



tracting the roe, he laid the slippery khaki shroud of its life out on ice in the showcase.

When I was very young, my father used to go to Dairy Land for lunch nearly every day. Dairy Land was the place, more than any other, that gave me my first sense of our relationship to Provincetown history. And then there was the name. Dairy Land. Land of Milk and Honey. I thought when I closed my eyes and listened to the words, but never if I opened them and looked. The Land of Milk and Honey was nowhere in sight at Dairy Land, lingering perhaps only in the cool churning stomach of the soft-serve vanilla ice cream machine. The ice cream window was an afterthought at this Dairy Land. Fried fish sandwiches and the lobsters in the fish market were the heart of the business.

Every time my father took me there in the summer, he always had the same ritual, and so, it seemed, did the others. For there was a community at Dairy Land, a group of locals that met there more often than even my father. Out there by the highway, away from the tourist-filled heart of town, that big room full of molded plastic tables was a place they could still own. After ordering, my father always greeted them, and then kept on walking to his table, two or three away, in an alcove by the window and beside the whining screen doors.

My father's good friend Matt Costa, owner of the Dairy Land, never failed to find us at our orange plastic table. Matt's satiny black eyepatch bulged like a skate's egg sack. Only the most curious or persistent children, I'd heard, saw the black hole behind it, the place where the hunter's bullet had miraculously spared the brain. Matt and my father would complain about business while I folded our yellow order slip into paper planes, boats, and birds. Near the table, a white plastic seagull, a gift from our store, always spun in place on nylon fishing line made visible by a layer of grease from the fryolator.

Matt decorated Dairy Land once. He painted the eaves bright turquoise, as far from the color of our seawater as blue can be. On a counter inside the dining room he lined up oversized lobster and crab claws in neat rows, the way prosthetic hands might be displayed in the window of a medical supply store.

The grand centerpiece of it all was the line of giant whale vertebrae, yellowed with grease or tobacco, which divided the dining room down the middle. Flies trickled in and out of the whale-bones' honeycombed crevices, finding something to live on still. The relics of our monster-slaying ancestors, strung up in chains in the great hall of the Dairy Land. The bones were dredged from the harbor not so long ago; each bone took half a man's day to haul up from the dark bottom.

Neighboring towns once complained about the smell of Provincetown. Before whale oil tryworks were built aboard ships, townspeople boiled whale carcasses on the shore in black iron pots bigger than bathtubs (filled today with impatiens or marigolds). The black smoke drifted

into Truro. The money, they say, was worth it. Long before the discovery of oil in Pennsylvania, my father often told me, Provincetown's inhabitants were among the richest in Massachusetts. Every home in America was lit with clean-burning whale oil, the impurities boiled away on the shores of towns like ours.

By the time I was in high school, every time I went to the Dairy Land I expected those bones to be gone. I wanted someone to finally grow disgusted, to unhook those creaking bones from their rusty chain slings and heave them back into the harbor. There seemed no way to embrace this history without taking on the burden of its dreams.

I met Matt's son Jimmy about 10 years ago, some time after he'd returned to town. Jimmy was meant to be the next generation at Dairy Land but he had left right after high school. Like my father, Jimmy told me that all he had ever wanted was to get as far away from Provincetown as possible, to get to the other side of the country if he could, to California. He had a life there for a while, he says, a good job in construction. But Jimmy believes somehow in wealth beyond the ordinary. So many of us do.

Jimmy had strange dreams, dreams far beyond Dairy Land, and I think this is why I liked listening to him. When I first met him I was fascinated that he had just bought a 10,000 dollar magnetometer, a sort of sonar for the underwater detection of buried metal masses (treasure, he said, or at least large shipwrecks). Whenever I talked to Jimmy, his enthusiasm for physics, for earth's magnetic fields, for true north and for the Van Allen Belts both thrilled and drowned me. His muscled arms would wheel in the air, describing paths around the planet and the rhythms of underwater frequencies.

For a couple of winters I ran into Jimmy most often in the frozen foods section at the A&P. I was away at school most of the time now, and we caught up on things while he leaned on the empty steel cage of his grocery cart. He was always working at something different: salvaging wrecked draggers, dredging the harbor, patching the town wharf. We talked about finding work that is independent of tourists, of the dead-end service economy. That did not leave much to do.

From the trophies in the Dairy Land, we both knew this: our ancestors throttled their leviathans, yet we have been asked to stand behind counters, take insults in exchange for money, fry up deep-frozen flounder. For my generation, heirs to little more than a shabby tourist industry, that myth of wealth is beginning to feel like a sick joke. Some people even say that that old story is a lie, a trick of statistics, and it may well be. When I try to reconnect our present to that past it is like trying to attach the five perfect, able, and utterly fake fingers of a prosthetic hand to the decrepit arm of the present.

The end came for Dairy Land about four years ago. On Matt's abandoned go-cart track beside the Dairy Land, the bent ribs of crippled wooden lobster pots jabbed at the sand inside the chain-link fence. Fishing boats and bare metal hulls

were stored along the track in a kind of slow and final race. The track, like everything at the Dairy Land in later years, was layered with forsaken enterprise.

The only thing out on Matt's go-cart track in working condition was an old U.S. Navy lifeboat. It had been stored upside down and its varnish and bright white paint looked new. My father, like some aggressive curator, decided he wanted the lifeboat for his store. He wanted it for a bare patch on his ceiling full of swaying relics, for decoration, perhaps, but in the end for a kind of dusty preservation, forever at risk of sale.

But something was wrong. My father couldn't make the deal, despite having lunch at the Dairy Land for days on end: linguica rolls, hamburgers, fried fish sandwiches, clam rolls. He even moved to the specials, marked in thick black pen on paper plates taped beside the Sprite machine. His old friend Matt wanted too much for it one day. Or changed his mind about selling it. Or didn't remember offering. The fully-outfitted lifeboat waited on the old go-cart track beside the turquoise Dairy Land, as if Matt were a half-blind Noah, preparing for a disaster he would not know.

My father never got the lifeboat. It wasn't until after I returned home from college, more than a year later, that he thought to tell me why. Matt had developed Alzheimer's Disease, that fate of forgetfulness, that vague and bleary end, that progressive good-bye to one's past.

## April

When my nephew, my parent's first grandchild, was born in Provincetown, I returned home for a few days to see him. My last afternoon there was the strangely warm day before an April blizzard that shut Massachusetts down. I rode my bicycle up along Commercial Street on the way home from Herring Cove.

I was coasting downhill beside a faded red firehouse. That famous light my mother had chased was crackling off the harbor down the landing to the right, and I felt for a moment an inkling of permanence. I pictured a century's worth of my ancestors' restaurants and markets twinkling in and out of existence in the shop windows ahead of me: Captain Swett's grocery and chandlery, Aunt Polly's Restaurant, Begunna's fish market, the Bradford Inn, Pat's Flagship. I felt that, like my infant nephew, I could be, in some still undisclosed way, a part of all this too.

The illiterate whaleman who brought my father's ancestors here left us a sailor's valentine, a mahogany box filled with shells arranged in a careful pattern. Crewmen carved sailor's valentines on long voyages in the hulls between whale sightings. Writing at a distance, I too have the time to fashion something impractical, perhaps clumsily beautiful, a gift for those at home who await my return without ever expecting it.

*Oona Patrick is pursuing an MFA in Bennington College's Writing and Literature Program.*



# A Moonless Night

by Jennifer Hagar



MARY HACKETT, *THE LIGHT THAT FAILED*, 1973

The September night was dark without a moon and my friend and I found our way to the Truro Historic Society by following the beacon of the Highland Light. We were there to hear poets Keith Althaus and Michael Burkard read in tribute to their friend, the self-taught painter, Mary Hackett. Fragments of the two poets voices drifted from the edge of the cliff where they were strolling. Beams from the lighthouse pierced the dark. My friend was visiting from her native London; she had a home in Provincetown for many years, raised two sons here and was working on a memoir about those years. Provincetown was hard for her to leave but once the break was accomplished she was intermittently drawn back by her family, her history, by the gravitational force that seems always to pull wanderers back to the desolation and particular richness of this outermost sand bar.

Hackett first came to Provincetown in 1928 and stayed, living here for over 50 years, until her death in 1989. She was "a painter who fools might label 'primitive,'" Philip Hamburger wrote in the *New Yorker*. Mary Hackett was an outsider artist, a loner, and "loners are liable to be forgotten," Althaus once observed. At the Historical Museum objects evocative of a lost Truro—artifacts from whaling days, old postcards—lay in the

***I have constantly  
followed love, brokenness, that which is not constant.  
The sea. The moon. Night. Sometimes the sun.  
Strangers always strangers.***

shadows. Upstairs, life-sized dolls in turn-of-the-century outfits inhabit small rooms.

Hackett's paintings were accompanied by her comments, noted next to the work. *Taormina, Sicily* (1968) depicts a tiny locomotive dwarfed by an active volcano, its vapor mimicking the plume coming from the engine's smoke stack. A quirky narrative, dated 1973, reveals something of the artist's history with faith. She first painted the train running toward the church but later, "annoyed with new changes in the church, especially the hand shaking bit," turned the train around. "Later I changed my mind and am no longer annoyed," she added in June 1987.

Burkard read a poem, "Horse Light," which was inspired by talks with Mary. "Why do you talk/about God/you might as well/talk about the railroad/at least they could/repair that/. . . for in the long night/it had been/horses/which understood/the nature of/a god/more clearly not/that they/were smart or/dumb as animals/but that

they/simply stood/there in horse light/and surrendered their manes."

As he read another called "The Mysteries of Things," the night and his poem seemed a valentine to the Lower Cape and its people—fluid, always changing: "I have constantly/followed love, brokenness, that which is not constant./The sea. The moon. Night. Sometimes the sun./Strangers always strangers." Burkard then told

of how he met Mary, "without really meeting her" one night when he went to an opening of her work at the Art Association. "I don't think I realized until later the painter who's work I'd admired so much was there. We started up a friendship. It was so helpful for me."

When I first met Burkard 11 years ago, he gave me his just-published book, *Fictions from the Self*. It was the first year of my sobriety and I was discovering how relinquishing an old self made possible mysterious connections between people. Burkard's poems seemed haunted by a ventriloquism, a being there and not being there, to which I felt a kinship. I was startled to realize it was my own solitude I was looking into. Around this time Michael and I shared a joke about how it was hard to find that middle ground between feeling the need to be perfect and otherwise feeling you should be dead.

Beside a painting titled *The Light that Failed* (1973), was Hackett's initial assessment: a "total failure." She painted the background several

colors, first white to resemble fog, then red and yellow "to take the curse off." Finally dark blue. "In the winter of 1983, I added Michael Burkard, the poet." Superimposed on the lighthouse is a dark outline of a man in a raincoat, hand in pocket, like a spy in from the cold. At this time, Burkard spent much time sitting with Mary Hackett, drinking coffee and smoking too much. Friendship, in times of psychic crisis, is like the lighthouse—sometimes much is illuminated, other times a shadow might fall over your confidante's face.

Althaus read a poem in which "the tireless lighthouse, flashes its ambiguous message: equal parts safety and danger; and its strobe shows, the night at work." This poem, "Treasure Island," is in part about an addict who fails to connect with others or his former self: "an overdose: a clear proof of something/still unclear. That night/when his connection came/he broke off talking/and tied his ascot/around his arm/and hunted for a vein/then leaned back, eyes filled/with appreciation, overwhelmed/as soundless applause/

spanned the living pain/separating the same person/years apart." The doubling in the poem recalled for me Hackett's self-portrait *The Big Me Standing in my Way* (1950), in which two Mary Hackett's in identical brown suits face off on a bridge, a beer bottle discarded at their feet.

Burkard ended the evening with a piece called simply "For Mary Hackett." He and Mary both had an affinity for the moon. He recalled how excited she was when she learned to tell if the moon was waxing or waning by what kind of "C" it made in the sky. "Some evenings when the moon is coming along, especially a new one, I say Hello, Hello Mary, and some evenings when it's the old moon I wave and say, 'C' you later."

Back in Provincetown, I looked at the lights of Truro from the seawall in front of St. Mary's Church. Late that afternoon my friend and I had gone swimming in the harbor. It was starting to rain and the water was warm but turbulent. My friend shouted something to me but the wind snatched part of her sentence. I only caught a fragment, my understanding like the strobe of a lighthouse illuminating a small patch of darkness and leaving the rest in mystery.

There still was no moon. The night seemed unfastened, opened to a celestial vastness, pricked by tiny lights.

*Jennifer Hagar is a writer who lives in Provincetown.*





VIEW OF THE ONCE-EXISTING HCE GALLERY, 1950s COURTESY ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTE

## "Pre-existing Nonconforming"

by Mira Schor

### I. The Personal

When you are a child, it never occurs to you that you might end up being a repository of history. The adults around you and the streets and buildings you pass every day are part of a solid landscape that you learn by heart but feel free to take for granted because you assume it is eternal. Slowly the people vanish, the buildings change, and you become one who remembers and who embodies the values of the human landscape of your childhood. This has happened to me. And I feel it perhaps most intensely in Provincetown whose concentrated physical space makes change and loss even more identifiable than in my also constantly changing but far more vast and complex winter hometown, New York City.

I was lucky to have been brought to Provincetown for the first time when I was a child of seven. My parents, Ilya and Resia, were artists. Provincetown was the final stop in their search for a summer place to be near the sea and near friends at the same time. In my world then were the painter Jack Tworikov, his wife, Wally, their daughters Helen and Hermine and later Hermine's husband, Bob Moskowitz; their house in the West End was itself like a painting—the walls and wooden floors of each room painted in muted warm or silvery colors, like the dunes and light of the Cape. On the way to their house, you might pass Miz Hofmann, snow white hair and pink cheeks like a storybook grandmother, working in her amazing garden, filled with sunflowers that towered over her. Also in my world: Chaim and Renee Gross in their wonderful house at the top of the highest hill overlooking the town; later, their daughter

Mimi and her then husband Red Grooms at the bottom of that hill. Both houses were filled to the brim with the energy of their shared love of drawing, color, pictures of all kinds. We lived in the East End, near Henry Rothman—the man was the definition of a bohemian, eking out a living as a framer, while turning out beautiful collages and photographs in the messiest, tiniest, darkest studio you could imagine, and warmly welcoming anyone who passed. To see Henry and Nat Halper, the former director of the HCE Gallery and organizer of several James Joyce events, chatting on the street in later years, was to learn the definition of "to schmooze."

One of the first trips I was allowed to take on my own was down Commercial Street to Tillie's, for a creamsicle and a languorous walk home on a hot day, snapping the leaves of hedges as I brushed past them. I still snap the leaves, but Tillie's is gone. It wasn't much of a grocery store even in its heyday but I'm not the only person who keeps a soft spot for its memory: every once in a while I overhear someone pointing out the new faux-Plantation style columned portico of the building's cantilevered bedroom and solemnly explaining to a friend, "That used to be a store called Tillie's."

In later years, I enjoyed observing the eccentric characters who formed a sort of summer repertory theater on "my" beach, in front of St. Mary of the Harbor. Whatever happened to them? Whatever happened, for example, to the woman I thought of as "the silly lady with the big breasts" because she constantly readjusted them—a nervous habit that drove me mad? Then one day I overheard her telling someone that yes, she'd be back next year because she "had" to, in the way you talk about the inevitability of attraction to the wrong love affair or an addiction. Silently, I shared her passion. But she and

the rest of the cast used to stay in relatively cheap rentals like *The Windswept*, which are now condos whose time-share owners and renters tend to be more buff but also more bland. I haven't seen her since.

It is not that I want to hang on to these memories, but rather that each physical landmark I pass emits the memories as if tripped off by a motion sensor. The annual Fine Arts Work Center auction summons up Chaim Gross, with his distinctive white hair, colorful shirt, and embroidered yarmulke, bidding enthusiastically on drawings I sometimes suspected he had himself donated to the auction! The yellow house that Rothman rented in the East End remains unchanged, but he and his friends are gone. The Hofmann house is faded and the garden no longer vibrant. The modest shingled house in the East End where the writer Mary Main, blind for many years, grew clematis that she described as having "beautiful purple flowers" even though she couldn't see them, is now a triplex condo.

The town as I knew it—shacks and cottages with splatter-painted uneven floors and individualistic gardens—is increasingly encroached upon by generic architecture, sometimes literally: the old HCE gallery, in one of the few modernist buildings in Provincetown (on Commercial near Cook Street) was recently encased by the back entrance of a condo hotel, the old front yard turned into a parking space. I'm told it was cheaper just to build right over the old concrete and glass building. I treasure every property that remains as was, down to even the wild rose bush that reaches out to scratch me when I pass the Mary Heaton Vorse house, connecting me back to the town as *she* knew it. The new architecture of Provincetown and Truro is often "Cape Cod" as opposed to Cape Cod, reinterpreted through the generic scrim of every other resort and suburban community in the country, be it Virginia Beach or Aspen. And that architecture signals the new moneyed class that is changing Provincetown in more ways than stylistically.

I know that there is no such thing as an unchanging standard of authenticity. The problem is not, certainly, that some houses have changed or that dear people have died, but that the money that is changing the houses is changing the human atmosphere, affecting the cultural climate and, ultimately, the basic character of the town.

### II. The Political

During the summer of 1949 Weldon Kees organized a series of panel discussions called Forum 49. At a crucial moment in post-war America, just before Abstract Expressionism was codified as an important and internationally marketable artistic movement and cultural phenomenon, artists and writers came together to discuss subjects at the edge of avant-garde thought. Across the nation, surely only a few thousand people, if that, placed themselves on that edge, and, that summer, hundreds of them clamored to get into 200 Commercial Street. At that location today stands the same building,



now cut in two parts to house a sex toy shop and a store selling luxury accoutrements for the beach. Whereas the crowd attending the 1949 events, by being at the intellectual forefront of American thought, were certainly at the margins of American society, the businesses that now occupy the site cater to a sybaritic culture that can only pretend to be marginal. In reality, it is a highly commercialized, skin-deep marginality that hides the conservatism and financial interests that have transformed Provincetown, submerging the rich cultural history of a town that once tolerated true marginality.

There is a paradox at work. People buy houses here in part because it is a town with a "live-and-let-live" attitude, but the most recent influx of money, coming not from artists, but, rather, from lawyers and stockbrokers, is creating an atmosphere, even visually, opposite of the one that nurtured several generations of genteelly poor artists and middle-class intellectuals. Those of us who remain of that group are like aborigines, unseen by our new neighbors, except as people who inconveniently can't upgrade our homes and must hang underwear out on a line for want of washer-dryers or Tite 5's. P'town aborigines have gardens with sunflowers growing where birds dropped seeds and honeysuckle running in confused profusion. "New money" gardens are often overdesigned, with plants sown in rows nature never intended and paths laid in curves *Martha Stewart* magazine must have dreamed up. The town management calls the older, more ramshackle dwellings "pre-existing nonconforming." What a perfect way to describe all that contemporary, market-mad, condo-ized, malled-in American society represses. I take that designation as a badge of honor.

The aborigine metaphor emerges from my personal experience with similar economic and architectural transformations of Tribeca, my New York neighborhood, and like Soho, an area pioneering artists put on the map—only to find themselves pushed right off of it. When my loft building was on the market, several prospective buyers toured through—groups of investors, usually young men in soft loafers, no socks, speaking into cell phones. However, one day I opened the door to find three young women inspecting my hallway. They were dressed in modified safari outfits and carried flashlights (though we actually have electricity in the building). They looked past me the way the Borg looked past individual humans in *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Since they seemed to treat the building as if it were in the deepest jungle of New Guinea rather than near the corner of Canal Street and Broadway, I was tempted to make Hollywood Saturday matinee jungle movie noises, like the irrelevant and conquerable savage I apparently was to them.

There used to be some cachet to living in an arty neighborhood, and the myth of the starving artist in a garret at least sounded romantic, but now the modest reality of the artist's life seems unfathomable. My new landlord can't understand why I would want to continue to

rent instead of buy, "But why would you want to do that?" *Want?* A recent article in the *New York Times* noted that real estate prices are driving artists out of the spaces they developed but can no longer afford, and into the outer boroughs, such as the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, where, surprise surprise, rents are also skyrocketing. As an aside, the article mentioned that Williamsburg is one of the most toxic neighborhoods in New York but that, after all, artists are used to using toxic materials in their work! The message reverses the famous *Daily News* headline, "Ford to New York: Drop Dead!" Now it is "New York to Artists: Drop Dead!"

In Provincetown it is the same: the town markets its history as a center for artists, but many art schools have closed, partly because students couldn't find the ratty but cheap summer rentals necessary to their stay in town (local restaurants and hotels have the same problem but a greater financial incentive to pay motel costs for imported workers). New York and Boston artists can't afford to come here now, and artists who live in town yearround struggle to find summer rentals. Those with affordable yearround rentals up creaking wooden stairs pray for the continued good health of their elderly landlords, fearing the condo-ization that will follow their demise. The purpose of organizations such as the Fine Arts Work Center, to bring new artistic blood to the Cape, is largely defeated by these real estate realities.

To return to Forum 49, it is unlikely that this kind of event could take place in Provincetown again since most liminal artists can't afford to come to Provincetown. The art community may revere the memory of luminaries such as Hans Hofmann and Robert Motherwell, but the young, unknown Motherwell, or Kline, Tworlov, or Pollock, could not afford to come to P'town today, and the world-famous artist would bypass it for hipper summer scenes. The reduction of seasonal flow between major urban art centers and the summer art community risks the establishment of a more regionalist art environment. It is a question and perhaps a challenge—could the current art community generate something like Forum 49, where the newest stylistic movements and theoretical issues in contemporary art and culture would be examined by an enthusiastic and informed crowd?

The bay is as uniquely beautiful as ever, and, when, in a storm or a fog, the town hunkers down to the shore, all seems unchanged. And, yet, Provincetown's physical appearance and its art soul threaten to become unrecognizable to its ghosts and unwelcoming of its aborigines.

*Mira Schor is a painter and writer living in New York and Provincetown. She is the author of WET: On Painting, Feminism, and Art Culture (Duke, 1997) and will exhibit a major drawing installation at Smack Mellon Studios in Brooklyn in September 1999.*

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VIEW OF A PHELPS RALLY, DOWNLOADED FROM HIS CONGREGATION'S WEBSITE

## Visits to Babylon

by Mark Doty

When the schoolbus carrying the followers of the Reverend Fred Phelps passed between the high dunes on either side of Route 6—the gates of Provincetown—were they startled that Babylon could be so beautiful? Or perhaps it didn't seem so to them at all. Perhaps what they saw was a little capital of sin; maybe the physical landscape doesn't seem real to them, the world a battleground for the forces of the spirit.

The Reverend Phelps' group is a tiny congregation, largely composed of members of the minister's own extended family. But they've garnered attention far beyond what their numbers would seem to command through the particularly vitriolic nature of their attacks on people who aren't like them, on gay and lesbian people particularly. "God Hates Fags," their notorious website is called, and they've borne this sour message before them everywhere, notably at the funerals of men who've died of AIDS, and most recently at the funeral of Matthew Shephard, the young Wyoming man who was crucified and beaten in 1998, in the most notorious gaybashing of recent years. At Shephard's rainy service, people tried to use their umbrellas to shield the young man's family from the signs the Phelps troupe waved: AIDS CURES FAGS, and other such vicious slogans, which in truth break my heart to read, and break my heart to write down.

This poisonous clan—so extreme that the rest of the Christian right wants nothing to do with them, which is saying quite a bit—seemed to arrive in Provincetown long before their yellow bus actually appeared. We knew they were coming; they warned us, of course, because they understand that their power lies largely in visibility, in the garnering of media attention. They must understand too that they strike very deep chords in the imaginations of those who oppose them, and that these feelings may be activated long in advance. If they'd simply shown up and picketed one day, I don't think their impact

would have been great. But we had months to anticipate them, months for their ugly words to work on us. When one has been the recipient of hatred, of prejudice of whatever sort, the idea of such cruelty is enough to trigger a deep response. Stupid as I know "God Hates Fags" is, the phrase seems to bypass reason; it sinks to some deep place in my brain, and I'm forced to begin marshaling my defenses, cutting off my sense of empathy for the person who'd say such a thing, isolating myself as I anticipate attack.

Is empathy possible? I try to imagine the women—easier for me, somehow, to try to place myself in the position of the Phelps women—on their bus, the glitter of Pilgrim Lake out the windows on one side, the rowed summer places on Beach Point on the other. They're singing, as is their habit, hymns; maybe they are brushing out their hair and tying it back out of the way with rubber bands, since they have work ahead of them; maybe they are giving instructions to their children, though perhaps they've all become such experts at these public appearances that it's no longer necessary to do so. How does it feel, to be possessed by a singular idea, a sense of mission? They believe they possess a truth the world does not; it must be a comfort to them, the coherence and seamlessness of their faith, to know that all questions can be answered. They must be certain of the rightness of their actions, that they carry an embattled flame into the outer darkness.

What I can't understand, much as I try to visualize the interior of that bus full of their clothes and duffel bags, their Bibles and songbooks and

sacks of chips and sandwiches, is the cruelty, the obvious meanness of the message. It's anathema to my sense of the teachings of Christ, who remained silent on the subject of homosexuality but had a great deal to say about kindness, mercy, forgiveness and judgment, whose company included few of the upright denizens of the temple but much of whores and thieves. There is some poisonous strain in American evangelical Christian practice which has nothing to do with this aspect of the Gospels; it seems instead an expression of rage, of class anxiety perhaps, of a great fear of the world-as-promised-and-expected having spun out of control.

So perhaps that's how one could feel some connection to these people. Imagine yourself a poor woman from Kansas. Maybe you finished high school, maybe not; either way the world doesn't seem to offer you much; what access to power and possibility do you have? One way is to find a strong man, and what if that man possessed some kind of truth not just about this world but the next; what if he was a fountain of answers, of certainty and strength; what if he made it possible for you to belong to something? Wouldn't you be willing to hate someone, on his behalf, wouldn't you be capable of blaming somebody out there for the way things are?

I put myself through such an exercise because I am, in some way, forced to; one can't look at the signs these people carry, once they unload and line up on the little green in front of the Pilgrim Monument, without reacting. What are the possibilities—rage, hate, feeling sickened? Of course, but one doesn't want to stay with those feelings; that would seem to let them win. The signs are designed to wound. And in Provincetown, of course, everyone who gathers on Bradford Street to see what the protesters have to say is ready to be wounded. We are, every one of us, people who've been knocked off center and off course by the epidemic; there isn't a soul in this crowd who hasn't lost someone to AIDS, who hasn't seen a beloved body



with and betray a beloved spirit. We have all struggled with the stigma of the disease; we have all done battle with a deep strain of shame we've inherited. These crude signs are like flintsparks in a very dry forest: we are prepared to be inflamed.

This, of course, has been anticipated. We've held meetings. We've carefully planned a non-violent response. An "expert" from the Kansas police familiar with Phelps' tribe has even been brought in as a consultant. He announced at a town meeting that he was "neutral" in terms of being on one side or the other. "Neutral" about a sign that says "AIDS Cures Fags?" Excuse me?

We understand that Phelps' church is largely funded by the fruits of his litigations; he knows exactly how far to go without breaking the law, and he knows exactly what responses from on-lookers will allow him to sue. Apparently his older children are lawyers, ready to go into action. And so we have volunteers, in white armbands, who keep us on one side of Bradford Street and the protesters on the other, monitors to calm us and console us.

I had thought, in advance, not to go; I didn't want to give Phelps the satisfaction. And then I thought, well, it's the life of my town, and rode my bicycle down to see. Nothing prepared me for the awkwardness of it, the hundreds of us standing and watching, powerless, while the Kansan women sang, in wavery voices, hymns, and the young Kansan men held their signs up and stared ahead with steely faces. And nothing prepared me for the children; their kids were holding placards in the air. There was a girl with shoulder-length blonde hair, 11 or 12, holding up a sign on which were drawn crude stick figures; one was bent over, while the other fucked him from behind. "ABOMINATION," the sign said.

And I was filled, as I suppose Reverend Phelps wished for me to be with rage. How dare he speak this way to us, when so many of us have suffered, when so many whom we loved are dead? How dare he parade this mindless cruelty on our streets? But there was another source for my anger, too, which is that I could not react. There was nothing to do. One could not strike back; one could not wrest the sign from their hands and tear it apart, and there didn't seem any point in shouting at them. As a crowd, we tried to laugh; we tried to applaud their singing, or make jests which somehow were intended to say we were above it all, but we couldn't sustain it. The morning wore on and we grew increasingly silent, pensive, sorrowful. We were supposed to be proud of ourselves for our strength, our ability not to give him what he wanted, and yet we didn't—I didn't—feel strong. I felt face to face with what a writer on the Holocaust called the banality of evil. We like to glamorize wickedness, to portray those who disregard others as privileged, energized by their freedom from moral codes; the movies are full of fascinating, desirable villains. But how ordinary and tawdry and casually brutal the scene was, how little passion or spark there was in it, as if the protesters acted out some tired script

dutifully, shuffled through their motions, their eyes thoughtless and blank. I felt defeated and paralyzed; I felt assaulted to the core of myself, and unable to speak back.

•

One year later, Houston. Paul and I are on the way out to dinner at a favorite cafe, a noisy and crowded place, good-natured and cheap and always packed with gay men, since it's in the heart of Montrose, which is Houston's center for sexual difference—well, cultural difference, too; it's the museum district, the antique shopping zone, the coffeehouse area. In short, the anti-suburb. Everything that doesn't go on in the great sprawl of shopping centers and new houses which is the bulk of Houston happens here.

It's a warm January night so we're driving with the windows open, which means that we hear every word droned out by the street preacher at the corner of Westheimer and Montrose—a place he's chosen, presumably, because it's the most homosexual intersection in town, the alternative nexus. He's on a strip of grass in front of a condom shop and a Taco Cabana, and he speaks up over the hoods of the cars—ours included—idling at the intersection: "... SHALL BE THROWN INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE . . ." We roll up the window.

After dinner, on the way home, I'm surprised to see he's still there. I get a better look at him this time: black pants, white shirt, his long fingers splayed across the black leatherette of his extra-large Bible. He must be about 40, the hair he's combed back thinning a bit; he has the look of a person possessed by a singular idea, that fixed intensity which is the mark of the visionary and the fanatic.

He's trying to preach to the cars on Montrose but keeps getting distracted by some kids on the sidewalk who are talking to him. They are young men, in their early 20s probably, sporting marks of difference: in the mass of them I can pick out a shaved head, a wallet chain, a goatee, a couple of tattoos. They say something to him I can't make out, he turns to them and begins to speak, and then one young man stands squarely in front of him, raises his fist and punches the preacher in the face, hard. It makes me draw in my breath, involuntarily. Paul says, "What?" The preacher goes down on his knees; he has his back to me but I can hear he's still talking, he is still testifying though the iniquitous have risen against him and smote him.

And the young man smites him again, hard enough for me to hear the awful impact of knuckles against face. The preacher falls backwards and writhes on the grass. The light changes; I don't know what to do; I imagine getting out to intervene and can't think what I'd actually say. Wouldn't I be hit by the young men myself? Before I even think it through I'm driving into the parking lot of a grocery store a block away, heading for a phone to call the police. But there's a cop car sitting in the lot, so I tap on the officer's window and tell him the story.

"Really?" he says. "Right down there?" as if I've startled him from a waking dream. And off he goes to intervene.

Violence, in the daily world of intersections and median strips, is horrifying enough in itself, but there's something further down in me that's been shaken by this. It's partly the strange feeling that we couldn't stand the street preacher either; that we shut him out, and hurried away. Knowing that everything in me opposes what he stands for makes me especially squeamish when he's hit, as if I were somehow complicitous in that punch. Did I have a hand, too, in that awful sound of fist meeting bone?

Not exactly, but I do share those young men's rage. I hate the way they seemed to beat him for sport, as part of some street evening's entertainment, but surely it wasn't just that; the boy who struck out at him, queer or no, must have been responding from some wound, some position of hurt. Isn't that what violence is, the turning outward of a wound, an act of inversion, in which powerlessness finds its way to strength? A dark strength, the wrong strength, but when one feels powerless it can seem that any power is better than none at all.

I suppose the young man was not hitting this preacher—or rather, not just hitting *this* preacher; he must have been striking at all the forces of judgment, the lockdown rules. Maybe the kid grew up in Texas; maybe he's got a lot to strike back against.

And on some level he was doing what I wanted to do, wasn't he? Not with the street preacher; he seemed merely an annoyance, some poor misguided soul who now had succeeded in martyring himself by preaching on the corner of the city most likely to get one busted in the jaw. No, my anger led me right to my memories of Fred Phelps, to that awful feeling of paralysis. Of course I'd wanted to blow that schoolbus sky-high, or to speak so eloquently and convincingly that the Christians would drop their placards in shame, and leave town resolved to find some other way to serve the Lord. Perhaps I wanted to slug them in the jaw. But not now, now that I'd seen it. I'd seen the street preacher's rage at something meet the street boy's rage at something, and truly I do not believe the anger of either one was actually directed at the other. But it didn't matter, just then; their angers collided. And that is where civility ends, where liberality ends, and the soul goes down on its knees in a brutal night, while the traffic whizzes by.

•

One of the difficulties of the months Paul and I spend in Houston each year is that the city's so developed it's hard to find places to walk our dogs, two big retrievers who need a daily run and ramble. We've found a park where there's a long grassy cordon, a right of way for train tracks and power lines, and it's about the only place where it's safe to let them run off leash. Or more-or-less safe; we still have to watch out for moun-



tain bikes, and trains. And sometimes for other people.

Arden and Beau and I had just come back to the parking lot after a long hike all the way to the edge of Buffalo Bayou, a muddy-green slip of a river that winds through town and floods like mad in the tropical rainstorms that are Houston's trademark. They were excited to see three other dogs, at trail's end, who were sitting beside the parking lot with their owner; my dogs love their social rituals and never miss an opportunity to wag tails, sniff, mark bushes together, and generally pursue the mysterious rigamarole which is canine greeting.

A black chow and a little blonde thing resembling a mophead jumped up to begin the process, and cordial sniffing began. The third dog, yellow-orange, with fox-colored eyes, sat on the grass with its owner and didn't move. "This one's dying of cancer," the man said. "These are his last couple of days." The guy was 50-ish, lean, a bit of a cowboy in tight jeans and boots, clumsy hands, a quality of being unaccustomed to talking about emotion, which he tried to deflect with a throwaway remark, a stab at cynicism, something like "That's just the way it is."

And so began a conversation about the dog's illness, and treatment, and grief; it was clear the man was in genuine pain, however he tried to dissemble, though it was harder to read the dog's feelings. She sat, got up and walked a little, sat again; she didn't appear to be suffering, but seemed a little dazed, tentative. He'd had her for 10 years, he said, her whole life. Her lymph glands were full of cancer; the vet had said they were nothing to worry about, those little lumps, but then it was too late.

During our talk Arden and Beau and the chow have been standing together, all with their chests puffed out, sniffing, the wagging of tails gradually diminishing; is that a low growl? Then it's a plain growl, from what throat I cannot tell, and suddenly Beau and the chow are at each other. Golden retrievers are known, of course, for their mild temperaments, and Beau is no exception, but he defends himself vigorously when the occasion merits and he's fierce now, his fangs showing, and he's biting at the chow's throat.

The man suddenly leaps into action. Both of us, in fact, are lunging for the dogs to pull them apart, but the man's faster than me; he grabs Beau by the collar and succeeds in pulling him away, yanking him several feet away from his chow. And that's where I think it will stop; that is the reasonable place for the conflict to end.

But then the man does the strangest thing; he puts his arms around Beau's torso, lifts him—a 90-pound dog, mind you—and throws him a little ways. I'm speechless, and even as I'm trying to find the words to protest the man gets his arms around the startled Beau again and lifts him into the air and throws him further this time. Now I have the words, now I am shouting "THAT'S ENOUGH!"

I rush to Beau and get ahold of him myself and the man backs off. I am holding Beau in a panic when he says, "I just want your dog to stay away from mine, I just want him to know."

I've dropped Beau's leash and the man is standing beside it. I say, "Throw me the leash."

The man says, "I didn't mean to hurt your dog."

I say, "Throw me the leash NOW."

And he does, and I put Beau on his lead, and I don't even hear whatever it is the guy is saying as we walk away. Beau is fine, physically, maybe a bit shaken, with that quick thoughtless look in his eyes dogs get when they're upset by something they don't understand.

I, on the other hand, am not fine. We get to the car and Beau jumps up into the back of the station wagon. I sit down beside him and throw my arm around his neck and try to collect myself. Arden's lying in the grass panting; I seem to be panting myself. I don't need to explain the deep affiliation dog lovers feel, the sense of protectiveness, the feeling that nobody else knows this creature the way you do. Perhaps I do need to explain that Beau has played a particular role in my life; he was adopted during the last month of my late partner's life, as a gift; Wally, who was paralyzed by a viral brain infection, wanted a new dog, wanted in fact to surround himself with animals. I found Beau at the animal shelter in Brewster, wild underfed neglected youth; I thought I was bringing him home for Wally and only understood later that a new dog, brimming with needs, was actually exactly what I needed. He was Wally's gift to me, something that would require my love and attention after Wally's death, something full of exuberance and the will to live when I had neither. And so he's my dog but he's a symbol, too, and sitting with him in the back of the car with my heart racing I knew I couldn't even protect him, couldn't keep him safe.

That's when the man suddenly appeared; he'd put his dogs in his car and come to talk to me. He said, "Is your dog all right?"

I said, "He's all right."

He said, "I didn't mean to hurt him."

I couldn't look at him. I said, "That was too much." Which was so much less than I wanted to say, but I suppose it might have been enough.

He said, "Yes. I wouldn't hurt your dog."

I understood then that he'd acted right out of his own pain; he had taken his grief for his dying dog and poured it straight into rage, into a fierce will to protect, which was something I could easily have felt myself. When Wally was dying I was furious with bankers, storeclerks, strangers. I was outrageous. That is a precise term; my rage went out, where it didn't belong, but where else was it to go? I understood all this, but I couldn't feel it; I couldn't look at this apologetic man and tell him it was all right, or that I understood. Because it wasn't all right; because I wasn't at any point of acceptance; because I was afraid for the golden creature beside me who is strong and independent and entirely vulnerable at once. I said, "Okay, boys, let's go home," and I closed the back gate of the station wagon,

got into the car and drove away. I wouldn't give the man what he wanted; I wouldn't forgive him.

When else could it ever seem so clear? The source of the man's pain was right there beside him; he was powerless to help her; he could not save what he loved. And his powerlessness and his wound poured out, right there, in rage.

Surely that is also what happened in Provincetown, and on that Houston streetcorner—save that in those instances the source of pain and powerlessness was further away, complex, buried. Though in just the same way it found its expression; the wound speaks out in a way that wounds others; it replicates itself.

How then, our question has to be, are we to end it? Can the power of empathy dissolve old hurts? I doubt it, but I believe that it can at least make it unnecessary for us to act out those wounds, and pass them on. When the man came to me in the back of my car, and asked after my Beau, he was saying, *I know you are real; you are another person and your dog is another dog, not mine, but how you feel is real, and I have acted wrongly.* His gesture seems to be what is required of all of us, if the brutality of American life is to change. I want the followers of the Reverend Phelps to say to us, You are real; you are not like us, but you feel as you do, you think, you do what you can. Which means, of course, that we would have to say the same to them.

The paradox at the heart of civil life is this: we must acknowledge that other people are other people, intractably themselves, and not us. And at the same time we must somehow understand that they *could* be us—that, if we dwell in their circumstances, we might see the world as they do, we might act as they have acted.

Just how hard this is to do is evidenced by my experience in the park. No one was hurt, no real harm was done, and yet I could not, at that moment, forgive, which means that I could not then put myself in that man's shoes. I don't blame myself for that; it was too soon, the experience too abrupt and frightening. But writing this, days later, he seems more three-dimensional to me, not an erratic, crazy threat but a person acting out of fear.

And perhaps that is where to begin: the followers of Fred Phelps, singing in their quavery voices, the watchful citizens of Provincetown, the street preacher on his buckled knees, the boys trying to be tough, trying to be free; we go in fear, all of us. If we acknowledge that in each other, we might move forward with something like kindness.

*Mark Doty's seventh book, Firebird: A Memoir, will be published this fall by HarperCollins.*



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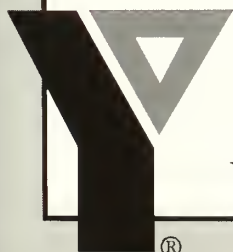
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## The Promissory Glance of **David Vereano** (1949-1993)

by Allan Gurganus



avid Vereano painted small enormous landscapes. Egyptian by birth, a Sephardic Jew by heritage, his turning up to limn New England's coasts and countryside seemed both apt, and, in the way of all historical migrations, wildly arbitrary. Though David departed this life far too soon, his pictures still seduce and scintillate and reassure. David created these promising fragments of landscapes with a disciplined spontaneity known only to some nomad briefly stationary.

His best paintings, often done outdoors before a modest eloquent vista, can literally trap one day's air and shifty atmospherics. His oil paint can enfold and then decode a whole day's lurking possibilities. Though he died at 44, Vereano's work found a large early audience. This was partly due to its available subject matter, its welcoming expansive sensuality, and to the compelling personal charm of the artist himself.

I first learned the pleasure of David's company during the mid-1970s at Yaddo, the artists' retreat in Saratoga Springs, New York. I was writing short stories and he was painting small pictures and—at once—we liked each other's work and looks. David, young then, looked even younger. Dark, half-plump, he uncannily resembled one of the best known Faiyum funeral images, *Portrait of a Boy*, (owned by the Metropolitan and reproduced as plate 284 in Janson's *History of Art*). Such memorial renderings, attached to the mummies of the subjects, were done in speedy encaustic. They date from the second century AD. They show prosperous, aesthetically advanced Sephardic Jews living in lower Egypt. David had this boy's same candid, half-spoilt gaze—loving and yet no fool, either. His eyes were that exact rich brown—immense, mischievous, canny, gamely willing to feel hopeful. He could be strangely innocent without ever once underestimating the charm of his own innocence. David was in full possession of his talent mercifully early; he lived to see at least a portion of its promise unlatch.

David Vereano was born in Alexandria, Egypt in 1949. His family lived comfortably, and with the expectations of continuing luxury. Though he later became a naturalized American citizen, David carried with him, on and off the canvas, a sensual relation to the physical world—available perhaps only to native speakers of both French and Arabic.

He remained, like his ancient forbears, a sort of spiritual wanderer; and even when he finally

owned land himself. After his own flight from Egypt, Vereano's "roaming eye" made many satisfying rest stops. Though he came to love and preserve New England's hills and coasts, he might have been depicting any land on earth. I mean, of course, any Promised Land. David's work still shows us glimpses, postcard come-ons, of some great contentment, if one always one resting just over the horizon. Still, the promise is large enough to seem worth a chosen tribe's 40 years of wandering. Or, in David's case, 44.

He lived on a first name basis with many notable people and quiet pleasures. His expectations remained, to the end, sweetly grandiose. He achieved surprisingly many of his own wishes. Such unreasoning continuous hope may account for the strange keen sense of anticipation that yet illuminates even his quietest landscapes. Some palpable, unaccounted-for optimism seems to hover midair in his best work.

David's father was a broker of quality office supplies. To amuse his son and daughter, Mr. Vereano, Sr. brought home the very best pencils and papers. When the artist's sister, Lilliane, was later asked about David's childhood subject matter, she at once said, "boats and houses." This would remain a constant. The family immigrated to the States in 1962 when David was 13. Surely that's an awkward age to turn up in a hard commercial land of presumed Promise. David always seemed to long for, and perhaps inevitably romanticize, that luxurious assured Old World. Perhaps the Vereano family never found in America a standing comparable with their former station in Egypt. David's own career therefore came to mean even more to his parents, his sister's family and her sons, the nephews David doted on and adored.

David graduated with a BA from Queens College in 1973 and an MFA from Boston University in 1975. His promise was seen at once. His most influential teachers were Gabriel Laderman and Rosemary Beck. They both became lifelong friends. I was with David in the hospital near the end of his life when Rosemary Beck brought him a valuable and casually-offered gift. It was a small oil painting by another of his great teachers, one of our country's singular recent prophets, Philip Guston. This gift was the sort of homage David warranted among his many loved ones. His own offerings to us were legendary. We'd learned never to admire too extravagantly anything in David's home. However impoverished he was at the moment, David might—like the Mideastern pasha he not-so-secretly was—press the beautiful objects into our hands, saying, "You know, this always did seem more yours than mine. Here, now it really is."

David owned a battered, if somehow classy, old green Volvo stationwagon. I would sometimes ride with him as he sought his afternoon's landscape subject. I wish I'd owned a camera. I would love to now show you a series of photographs mapping David's artistic approach—from spotting through the car window an appropriately promising view, to his makeshift ditchside parking, to his ducking barbed wire and striding permissionless into some farmer's accidentally



picturesque field. I would certainly include the assembled black and white cows, their mild surprise, brief alarm, and quick return to mandatory munching. David would trot back to the car for his fold-out easel, an insect-like wooden object that he would hoist easily as some pressbutton umbrella. Using his car's opened tailgate as a lab table, he would lay out his palette. Once a panel was affixed to his easel, David—situated in the countryside—worked with rapt speed.

In life, he could sometimes jump from topic to topic, suggestion to sensation, craze to fascination. But in art, he found his greatest concentration. As David grew more and more involved with today's picture, there'd come a strange, dance-like bowing from the waist, his head and shoulders were soon swinging past the picture's surface to keep track of the horizon. Then there'd come a sudden dogged ignoring of that very inspiration. It was now he drew closer and closer to wet paint. After some spell of this, he'd begin a final series of high-stepping backings-up, comparing what he'd rendered to the ever-changing sky and woods. Rushing to and fro, he'd be unmindful of some cow who'd grazed too close, some cow who had to lurch away with a sudden speed made far more impressive by its sheer mottled girth.

Accompanying David on such jaunts, I usually sat under some roadside shade tree. I wrote until 3 P.M. and he preferred afternoon light. My own workday was done but I still pretended to write fiction on a yellow pad. Or I sat intending to reread the Dickens I'd brought along. But mere alphabet soon lost its allure. How could it compare to David's unwitting dance out there? A beloved summer-browned boy hyper-alive while depicting a world all green and blue and easel-colored! How young we were! How kind was our genial mentor, the World of Summer! Might a page's black and white ever compete with just how fast this tumbling sky changed?

I think David's skies revealed his work at its supple liveliest. He admired Boudin's sense of banked seaside light; he loved Constable's fast brilliant studies of clouds. David could capture certain quicksilver atmospheric conditions precisely because his shorthand remained so youthfully speedy.

He wielded a palette knife, a brush, and sometimes his fingers or the side of one hand. Odd, though he wore khaki shorts and a perfectly laundered white shirt, he never seemed to get a spot onto his clothes. He often swiped most paint from a panel's surface, starting over, then working fresh. Since the oil paint was often applied with considerable thickness, too much over-layering could spoil its freshness, could give the surface a dulled, "worked" look. David always rejected that. He so valued the appearance of spontaneity, even when such lightness came at the cost of many spoilt first attempts. He



DAVID VEREANO, *HOUSE III, PROVINCETOWN*, 1987 PHOTO ANDY ABRAHAMSON

painted and repainted a motif, preferring to do three to six to nine versions till he struck the one that really caught the landscape, the day.

Headed home, I always feared that such complexly wet paintings—in being transported by car—might fall like so many soufflés. But David, arranging such works face-up in the back of his wagon, never seemed to spoil one. Even on returning to our homebase, even while unloading the day's work, David would once again be scanning each picture's glossy wet. He'd tilt his head, make his eyes go in and out of focus, adjudging what, if anything, he had captured just an hour ago outdoors. Whichever bullishly overspecific hillside started the picture, it was rarely merely portrayed in his finished work. The final picture would show a scumbled impression of one hillock's essential roll, the merest blue-gray registration of some place's general June breeze.

The danger in painting a beautiful landscape is, of course, your producing merely pretty pictures. You take a large risk in choosing "Sunset" as your subject. Any sunset's actual improbable fauvist palette will try upstaging the will and architecture of your own handmade attempt. Try painting all your life only the face of Greta Garbo; the more accurately you detail her beauty, the more your masterwork either looks like Greta Garbo. Or does not. Natural beauty—unalloyed by dubiety, geometry, or discipline—will always demean your keenest attempt at saving it.

In David's best work, there is both sufficient speed and specificity to offset the onus of mere prettiness. We can still feel his generous first courtesy to the actual offered colors of a given afternoon. Then its proffered range of hues is pushed, manipulated, heightened, intelligently simplified. The surface always bespeaks the joy of Vereano's deft touch, his certainty, his years of training as an observer of other painters' great landscapes (Poussin, Claude Lorrain, Corot, Manet, Sisley, Morandi, and the great Cézanne all come to mind). These loving references can be felt in some single sweep of sky tone, in the stubby underling cooperation offered by a fringe of trees or cusp of beach below.

I can attest that David was a person, as well as a painter, of great largesse and wit. When he had money from a grant or commission, so did his friends. I must also state that, during his tragic illness, long after he had been deprived of his visits to the landscape that gave him such strength, he still enjoyed the confidence and support of his dealers, Bernie and Sue Pucker. Their gallery offered health insurance that so helped ease his last days.

Now, of course, medical advances would have lengthened David's life. He might have lived to paint more and even deeper, richer pictures. But, even when mortally ill, David never lost his

sense of mischief, his deep, push-pull fascination with other people. He held onto long-term loyalty—both to his beloved family and his oldest friends. It is a beautiful quality and one increasingly rare. I think traces of that hopeful faith remain visible in David's finest work. You feel a wide open "What if...?" There is a standing invitation both to us and to the world he offered.

Vereano's work still awards us, like the boy himself with that avid, ancient Faiyum gaze, a steadying form of company and inspiration. He faced the horizon and dared repeat only some of what it told him. He was the kind of loving pal who introduced friends to other favored friends. He mediated the landscape with that same intimate immediacy. "You must meet..." and here I picture David, turning with an elegant hand, signaling to God's own handiwork—the foreground, middleground, deep background of the promissory earth itself.

There was, about David, always something of the temporary honored guest among us. He might've been in the States only on a Tourist Visa and therefore ready for any transient local amusement. He could be amazingly patient with the foibles of certain difficult friends. He tolerated eccentricity the way only someone newly arrived here would. He bought a farmhouse in upstate New York and transformed it—with the minimum of means but that huge heart, those immense, knowing brown eyes—into the most luxurious of hangout-retreats.

And yet, in some way, he always remained Egyptian. And of course, he was forever concentratedly Sephardic. Aesthetic, melancholic, quickly brilliantly amused, and yet somewhat detached, as befits someone whose citizenship is so customarily revoked. He was, in the truest sense then, "a man of the world." His tastes were those of an advanced, Europeanized, playboy Middle-Easterner. His ethics and his vision always seemed those of a nomad: the child sent away at age 13 and forever seeking some wonderful way back in. A child not counting on



further dispossession and certainly not on a cruelly early death.

In Deuteronomy 34, God allows Moses the merest glimpse of the long-sought Promised Land below,

And the Lord Said unto him, This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over there. So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab.

In a way, all the landscapes of David Vereano are glimpses of a Promised Land. It is an earthly paradise long-sought and about to finally be entered. But not, alas, by the leading Nomad himself. He only got us to its edge. He led us right to the border of our sovereign country. He now points us across the hill to that golden land, suddenly and magically visible below. That far country never will contain our friend, the one who predicted it and, in so fervently predicting, helped create it in our hearts and imaginations. Showing a strange cheer, David will be denied entry: into his own maturity, into his fullest promise, into a kind of fame for which he seemed, so early, fated.

And yet, through the alchemical diplomatic Godly intervention of art itself, the Promise still feels kept. His landscapes yet give back to us (and perhaps, we hope, even to David himself), his transient's fantasies of peace, his yearning for the old luxury, his wish for a full and perfect possession at last!

He's less a ghost now, more our hyper-living host. We find, upon entering the Promise, we have been led, circuitous, back to our own youthful starting point. We never knew what exiles we were until, about to step across the boundary, we recognized the very land of our sweetest origin. We owe thanks to our guide. He goes on pointing out this pleasure, that raked light, that dissonance in shade. He still shepherds us toward the beautiful, even after slipping the bounds of mere mortality.

*David:* We yet recall you with such gratitude. Beautiful, irresponsibly generous, gifted friend, you were yourself a gift. Old as we are now, and as bitter at your loss, we do have the lessons of your work. And, through that: *We still see the World's promise in Yours.*

*Allan Gurganus is the award-winning author of Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All, White People, Plays Well With Others, and a collection of novellas, forthcoming next year from Knopf.*

*This essay is from the catalog to the exhibition, "David Vereano: Landscape, Memories, A Tribute," June 19-July 12, 1999, at Boston's Pucker Gallery. Representatives of David Vereano's estate, the Pucker Gallery has a selection of the artist's work on view throughout the year.*



## My Mom

by Jonathan Sinaiko

Suzanne Sinaiko was buried last year on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. It was a clear calm day, an easy day to be outside, though she would have loved a damp gray day to remind her of the Belgian seashore.

The graveside gathering was attended by those of us who winter here and those whose lives have taken them elsewhere. Suzanne transcended those categories; somehow it felt like she was around even when she wasn't. During her almost 50 summers in the East End, kids grew up with her, neighbors grew old with her, and everyone enjoyed saying hello. Townies, washashores, artists, writers, and restaurateurs were all there to pay their last respects. Every one of them had something simple to say about a moment they shared together, an instant when she touched the present without taking anything away.

Suzanne was an emigrant from Belgium, a refugee of the war. She will be remembered as a mother who never stopped believing in all children, not just her own, as a painter, as a superb cook always ready to feed whoever came through the door, and as positive, supportive, and generous with her feelings and pleasures, ready to try to heal another's pain. Suzanne's gifts are measured in short notes of passion and small acts of kindness bestowed with no strings attached.

Her garden represented the joy she cherished most—that which celebrates the present, whether a flower in full bloom, a party in full swing, or a lively conversation. The garden was never gated, never guarded, never restricted; everyone was welcome to wander though, to sit, to paint, to share. It was her way of saying thank you for all her good fortune.

I think in the end she gave so much that she was left with nothing for herself, no way to protect herself from the turmoil of everyday life. She knew too well that giving feels much better than taking. She left us all with a little more acceptance of each other and a little more faith in ourselves.

*Jonathan Sinaiko is a filmmaker and a columnist for the Advocate.*



# Lee Falk: Honorable Ancestor

by Raymond Elman

Lee Falk died this spring. He was 87. Shortly after I moved to Truro in 1970, I began hearing drumbeats about Lee. I asked my first Outer Cape friend, Terry Kahn (son of the late *New Yorker* writer E.J. Kahn, Jr.), who was then writing for the *Advocate*, "Who is Lee Falk?" Terry responded, "Well, I would say he's kind of an adventurer." I immediately pictured a Clark Gable-like figure, clad in safari jacket and broad brimmed hat. Lee didn't disappoint. Twenty-five years later I painted a picture of him in just that gear—jaunty leather string tie with silver clasp under his shirt collar, leaning against the umpire stand on his tennis court.

In March, I attended Lee's memorial service at Campbell Funeral Home in Manhattan. Lee's wife, Elizabeth, an opera director, orchestrated a tribute that was both inspiring and teary. Speakers addressed Lee's central interests: his two adventure comic strips, *Mandrake the Magician* and *The Phantom*; theater; opera; Truro, and family.

The first speaker was Bruce Paisner, of Hearst Entertainment & Syndication, which published *Mandrake the Magician* and *The Phantom* for 65 years. By now, the story behind Lee's strips is well documented (see *Provincetown Arts*, 1989). So, Paisner focused on the meaning of Lee's feat—65 years of daily publication in many different languages all over the world. Paisner proposed that Lee spoke a universal language; in every country, the readers thought Lee was one of them—a paisano, a lansman, a native.

Paisner was followed by Jules Fieffer, who along with Lee was one of a few artists who worked both in theater and the cartoon arts. Over the years Lee owned and operated several theaters, including playhouses in the Boston area and in the Bahamas. Lee wrote plays, directed, and produced. The actors he worked with included Marlon Brando, Karl Malden (who said that Lee was a major influence on his career), Katherine Hepburn, and Charlton Heston. Fieffer pointed out that Lee was a pioneer in both mediums. *Mandrake* was the first adventure strip to include a black hero, Lothar, an African prince who was Mandrake's constant companion. Lee was also responsible for the first U.S. production of *Othello* starring a black actor, Paul Robeson. Even filmmakers Federico Fellini and Akira Kurosawa cited Lee as one of their sources of inspiration.

Herman Badillo, a Wellfleet resident and New York politician, who found a judge to marry Lee and Elizabeth on New Year's Eve, 1976, spoke next. Echoing Paisner's remarks, Badillo spoke of growing up in Puerto Rico reading *The Phantom*. He had such a strong attraction to the characters that he was certain Lee Falk must be Puerto Rican. Badillo also described Lee's willingness to organize events, raise money, and stump for friends such as himself and Alan Cranston, the



THE PHANTOM, MANDRAKE, AND LEE

retired California senator who once made a run for the Oval Office.

One of the most moving testaments to Lee's character was provided by John Martello, an actor. In the final month of his life, Lee asked to be read to from *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, childhood favorites that inspired and informed both *Mandrake* and *The Phantom*. Martello, who read to Lee, commented, "When I get a head cold, I don't even want to watch TV, let alone have someone read me *The Iliad*." Lee dictated new *Mandrake* and *Phantom* stories to Elizabeth until his last days.

Others spoke of Lee's impact on the Truro community. Lee created rituals that enriched life in our colony, such as the Truro Invitational Tennis Tournament and two tennis brunches each summer, which always featured Black Velvets (Guinness Stout and Champagne) and scrambled eggs with pimento stuffed olives. For an Outer Cape tennis bum, the Truro Invitational Tennis Tournament was the equivalent of the Davis Cup. Robert J. Lifton, E.J. Kahn, Jr., Doug Huebler, Alec Wilkinson, Palmer Williams, Morton Dean, to name a few—all would have gladly cut their best friend's throat to get a clear shot at winning one of the coveted glass-bottomed pewter mugs that served as trophies.

Lee enriched the Outer Cape art scene as a bedrock supporter of the Truro Center for the Arts at Castle Hill. He was both president and a generous financial donor. Lee also brought many

productions of professional theater and opera to the Outer Cape.

For as long as I knew Lee he regaled listeners with stories of travels to exotic places and encounters with famous people such as Fellini and Brando. He also took special delight in making the world a more interesting place for children. At the memorial, Lee's grandchildren recalled driving around Truro in his Jeep, singing a silly song that Lee remembered from before the war. Over 30 years later they performed the "Jeep song" for us, and the mascara began to run.

Even my nine-year-old son, Evan, regarded Lee as a special friend. They often chatted at art openings or at the post office in Truro Center. After seeing the recent movie version of *The Phantom*, Evan sent Lee a note of admiration. Elizabeth told me that Lee kept Evan's little note to the end.

Lee will be missed by his old friends and the very young at heart.

*Raymond Elman is an artist who lives in Truro. He has shown in many local galleries, served on the board of the Provincetown Art Association, and co-founded Provincetown Arts. He is now president of an interactive communications company based in Boston.*

# Al DiLauro: A Collage Portrait

by Lynne Burns



AL AT HIS STUDIO, 4 BREWSTER STREET, 1982 PHOTO: LYNNE BURNS



POOL RICHARDS LANDING NOV. 1, 1977

In a series of Al's collages called *The Artificial Daffodil*, **daffodils appear in strange places**. *Attenzione* magazine wrote that the series was "uncanny in its ability to fool the viewer. 'People have wandered into a show of mine and left thinking they've seen photographs,' DiLauro notes with irony."



NORMAN MAILER, 1967

Al also did a series on people, including Martin Luther King, Jr., JFK, Norman Mailer, and Ciro Cozzi. (If you are in Ciro and Sal's restaurant this summer, you can see it hanging upstairs.)

I met Al DiLauro in the summer of 1977 at Ciro and Sal's bar. Originally from Philadelphia, he had moved to New York City in the 1950s and around that time, also began spending summers in Provincetown. When we met, he was in his mid-40s, **handsome, and flirtatious**. He had classic Italian features, wavy silver hair, kind eyes, and a great smile.

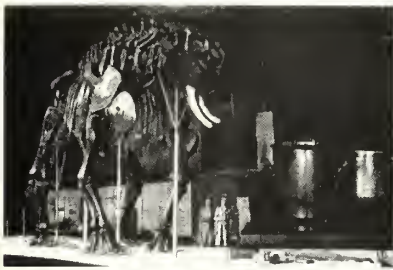
He introduced himself as a "painter and pornographer." The year before he had co-written, with Gerald Rabkin, a book entitled *Dirty Movies: An Illustrated History of the Stag Film, 1915-1970*, and made a compilation of stag films called *Old, Borrowed and Stag*.

Al attended Fleisher Art Memorial from 1948 to 1950 and Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts from 1953 to 1957. On the Cape, he studied with Henry Hensche.

The November 1974 issue of *Cosmopolitan* magazine did an article on whether or not men like women to chase them. Twenty six "attractive and eligible bachelors," including Ben Vereen, Joe Namath, Desi Arnaz, Jr., and Al, were asked: "Do men love bold girls who make the first move?" Al's answer: "If a girl calls, I ask her, **'Do you want to make it or do you want to get married?'** Since no one has ever admitted to the second, I invite them all to my studio. First, though, I warn them I haven't worn a tie in years."

Al was a ladies man and there were always women around him. In the old world tradition, he never spoke about them. But he would introduce them to each other. At his funeral I sat behind a row of women; none seemed surprised that each had a different night of the week they spent with him.





Al was working on *The Suicide Cookbook* when he died. Here is **his recipe for Elephant Stew**: Bone and cut one elephant (or three rhinoceroses) into mouth-size pieces. This should take about three weeks. Add two cans of Del Monte diced peas and carrots, 60 cents worth pignolis, and enough brown gravy to cover. Simmer for two months over a low flame. Yield: 3600 servings. If more guests are expected, two rabbits may be added. Do this only if necessary, as most people do not like to find hare in their food.



Al once told me that he had never been married, never lived with a woman, and never owned a plant. I bought him the hardiest plant I could find. In his last years, the plant became the subject of a series of paintings.

# PROVINCETOWN OTHER

**BALES OF POT WASH ASHORE**

**Blessing Of The Feet 1980**

**Casino Gambling For Heritage Museum (P.3)**

**Sinatra To Save Our Town (P.19)**

In 1980, Al published the *Provincetown Other*, a parody of Provincetown's only other newspaper of the time.

In the fall of 1985 Patty and Ciro Cozzi visited their old friend Angelo Ippolito in upstate New York. It's that time when leaves change color, days are warm, and nights are chilly. They shared delicious home-cooked Italian dinners and when they left, promised to do it again sometime. A few days later, Ciro called Angelo to tell him that Al had died. Every year since then, Ciro and Patty visit Angelo on October 20th, the anniversary of Al's death. **At dinner they set a place for Al, pour him a glass of wine, and all drink from it.** They tell all the old stories and for a night, Al is with them again.

## Gone But Not Forgotten . . .

Alfred DiLauro was born in Philadelphia, PA on July 3, 1930 in the home of his immigrant parents, Domenico and Carmela. He grew up in South Philly where everyone was Italian, so his parents never spoke English. Al never spoke Italian. They understood each other then responded in their own language.  
—JOAN ALESSIO VERNOSÉ (AL'S NIECE)

I remember his saying repeatedly that he never drank tomato juice, never went to Bloomingdale's, and prior to my moving from downtown to the Upper West Side, that he'd never been above 14th Street. —MEL ROMAN

Al was the only Italian we ever met who was allergic to tomatoes. "If women were tomatoes, Al would be in trouble," Madge used to say. "Where does he get all those thousands of little bits and pieces of paper for his collages?" was a question Madge and I used to bat around when conversation ran thin. "And with what does he affix the paper to his canvas?" was another. "Affix" was one of our better words. "Hey Al, affix me another drink!"  
—JACKSON LAMBERT

"My Partyin' Angel" Al Dees always keepin an eye out for me specially when I'm mopin around fergettin to swing with every precious moment whisperin his cool cat reminder to "Have Fun!"  
—ARNIE CHARNICK

Ciro Cozzi, Mel Roman, and I, three of Al's closest friends, were at the funeral. Sadly, one said to the others, "I can't believe this; we should be here for Al's wedding, not his funeral." I looked up at the other two. "Who are we kidding? Al'd rather be dead than married."  
—ANGELO IPPOLITO

On October 20, 1985, Al DiLauro died. It was a heart attack, and mercifully quick. I was with him. I first met Al through Lynne Burns. It was at one of her convivial gatherings that I became really aware of him because he suddenly (why?) told me a truth about myself, looking at me with his clear, compelling, artist's eyes. I felt the strength of his character and his kindness, for it was said without condemnation. Who could resist Al? He had the gift, the power, of compassionate understanding. Once Al was your friend, it was for life.  
—BARBARA GUERARD LANDRY

Al DiLauro's collages and paintings will be shown from May 22 to September 12 at *Cameo Appearances* in New York and his collages in August at "234" Gallery at Hannah in Wellfleet.

Lynne Burns is a photographer who has lived in New York City and on the Lower Cape since the 1970s. She and her partner, Buster Atkins, own *Cameo Appearances*, a gallery and retro/antique store in the East Village.

poetry  
poetry  
poetry  
poetry  
poetry  
**THIS**

# BE THE VERSE

by Joshua Weiner

The current situation of the art of poetry in this country is unprecedented. Until recently, poets have always had to contend, negotiate, rebel against, absorb, "misread," or ignore a dominant paradigm (such as accentual-syllabic verse), historical movement (such as Romanticism), or looming influence (such as that of Eliot or Yeats). At the moment of our own particular modernism, however, all the kings are dead, their legacies up for grabs, their influence all tributary against the rushing confusion of many mini-isms, schools, associations, academies, and the like.

Twenty-five years ago, "language" poets were fighting their sense of the good fight against a mainstream naturalism, poets such as Pinsky and Ammons were exercising a more discursive mode against the predominance of a post-war imagism bogged down by mere psychological gesture, Elizabeth Bishop began usurping Robert Lowell as *the* contemporary poet who seemed to point in the next direction for women and men alike, and a distorted perception of Williams still provided the best excuse for young poets to ignore the craft of verse. Ten years later, the "new formalists" began their attack on the practice of a rhythmically slack free verse, promoting instead the idea of formal rigor and a return to conventional narrative—they succeeded in achieving the latter without the former. Such debates between the use of free verse and traditional meter are now historically irrelevant; the more pressing issue, in terms of aesthetics, has become one of referentiality—to what degree shall the poet try to represent the real or cut loose from such responsibilities.

In light of this struggle, John Ashbery's cut-ups in *The Tennis Court Oath* (1957) provide one important bridge between an early and late generation of 20th-century modernism, while the work of Czeslaw Milosz stands as an impassioned, rational response to such linguistic derangements. Yet there remains no dominant authority. This aesthetic freedom is exhilarating though terrifying, and, like all true terror, it breeds a certain amount of boredom as one waits and waits for something truly terrific to happen. It hasn't happened. (When it does, chances are it will happen by virtue of a lexical shift—as in the age of Chaucer, and then Shakespeare—rather than yet another generation of stylistic exertion.) Nonetheless, exciting poems are being written, written in many different modes by poets exercising many strategies of making. One of the lessons of the moment, perhaps, is that different modes are not necessarily opposed or mutually exclusive (nor do they intrinsically embody one set of politics more than another). The aesthetic democracy of the '90s, especially as practiced by younger poets, suggests that cross-reading—reading across different aesthetics—will be the ground for the new poetry. Whatever the new poetry will be—and it's up to the present poetry to bring it into being—for the art to survive it must give pleasure. Enjoy your millennium.

*Joshua Weiner, poetry editor of this issue, received a 1999 PEN New England Discovery Award. For the past three years he has served as writing coordinator at the Fine Arts Work Center, where he was a fellow in 1994. He recently completed a doctoral dissertation on the poet Mina Loy and will begin teaching creative writing and literature at Northwestern University in the fall.*



SPEECH TO BE MADE BY X  
IN THE NEXT LIFE  
WHENEVER HE GETS THE CHANCE

by David Rivard

"That slapstick you saw me as—  
alcohol, & finally a stroke or two jerking  
the thin threads strung at ankles,  
jaw & knees—he's the one

dead. A spook. And for you, still,  
a puppet. Amusement,  
and lesson. Don't go home  
feeling you knew me. Your part

was small, voyeur more than advisor.  
An errand boy, & darkened  
body I'd fidget beside  
in a San Francisco cineplex. No.

I raised my hands to my eyes  
and shouted NO! to make my mind  
or Kurasawa stop a head like  
mine from spinning slo-mo away—

lopped off  
by a malicious warlord swordsman  
who had walked the countryside for years  
in insect-scaled armor.

A woman's bright silks burned,  
inside her timbered fortress. The head  
flew across a bonfire. In the theater  
I shouted

To get the thought out  
of my own broken mouth, & even louder  
another time, but happy then  
we were watching a bunch of Forester's

Edwardians cavort in a pool,  
up to their gentle assholes in Umbrian  
pond-lilies. A little  
faggoty I bet you thought.

After I died, I re-entered the world as  
something shining & silver—  
maybe the steel of that warlord's  
sword, a polished blade, or pond water,

sun-struck, teasing. What about  
you? how are you making it  
these days—is it poverty, or pleasure?  
Hard to say? The question

is foolish, I know, a pinwheel  
costing as much as a windmill  
whoever does the wishing. Wishes  
dream us. Why?"

*David Rivard's new book, Bewitched Playground, will be published by  
Graywolf next spring. He teaches at Tufts and in the MFA Program at  
Vermont College.*

DIALOGUE OF THUNDER

by Christine Hume

Dropped off the tip of the tongue  
Or the mind's muddy backslide, a place called  
Forgot keeps her listening to downflights  
Of laundered lightning, its tuning-  
Fork-hum of parents still at work on her.

Rubber gloves poised for recondite  
Ransacks, their yellow, crooked fingers pass  
And counterpass, stunning her nimble senses.  
Fat chance of catching their alarm  
And high-toned gravy running with the news.

Their leisure is all industry to her.  
Humdrum, they flex near her crooked chimney;  
God-eaten spaces spring with experience and  
Know-how, singing *Likewise-Likewise*. Child,  
*Don't look at us through your dirty bangs.*

What purview she has stutters.  
See how confusing her one body is,  
See-sawing on the hinge of house and home.

*Christine Hume's work has appeared recently in Best American Poetry,  
Colorado Review, Conjunctions, Fence, and Volt. Her manuscript, Musca  
Domestica, won the Barnard New Women Poets Prize this year and will be  
published by Beacon Press next April.*

## AT LAKE HOPATCONG

by David Ferry

A picture taken years before I was born:  
My mother, her sister Sis Nellie, their mother,  
Whose name was Emma Saunders Russell, holding

My sister Eleanor, a babe in arms,  
My father in a stiff high collar and a boater.  
My mother is smiling, her hand on her hip. She's wearing

A large hat (is it a toque?) with a high dark  
Upstanding feather. Sis Nellie and my mother  
Are standing sideways to the car, their faces

Turned to the camera, so that together they frame  
The ikon of my grandmother and my sister.  
I recognize from later memories

Sis Nellie's stylish intelligent-looking face,  
The elegant round gold glasses. She is wearing  
A tweed coat of some relatively light color,

And a hat with a narrow brim but full above,  
Gathered by a silver buckle to a peak.  
My mother's wearing a dark coat with an open collar,

Showing the white blouse over a dark skirt.  
The blouse has dark buttons. The family group  
Is standing in front of a high auto with tall

Thin wheels, with gracile tires and wooden spokes,  
And a canvas top, a beautiful grill adorned  
By a radiator cap that looks like a saltcellar.

There is a fluent decoration painted  
As if incised on the surface of the hood,  
Of the kind that you still can see, painted on trucks,

That gives them their incongruous feminine charm  
And delicacy, as if the figuration  
Was music playing across the metal surface.

The canvas roof of the car's like a little tent  
Or pavilion someone put up to celebrate  
Their Sunday outing in New Jersey, in nineteen-

Seventeen. Probably the picture is being taken  
By Uncle Frank, Frank Stanley, Sis Nellie's husband.  
Because of the limits of the camera

The sky is hard to read. Impossible to tell  
The time of year on that weekend afternoon.  
I think I can read in her witty-looking face,

From things a doctor told us many years later,  
Some things about Nellie's subsequent life which she  
Was already concealing and concealed her whole life long,

Her lifelong unbroken hymen, and I therefore know  
Some things she didn't know about yet, or was only  
Part way through knowing about, in all the story

Of that future, the frustrated sexuality turned  
Into malice abetted and invigorated  
By the cultural verve and ignorance of the place

And circumstance in which she was brought up,  
At Willoughby Spit, near Ocean View, at Norfolk.  
But in my grandmother's face there's little to read,

Because I know little about her, so I take her  
Almost "as she is," a pleasantfaced woman,  
Obviously with trouble with her teeth,

As seen by the conformation of her mouth,  
Smiling without opening her lips. All I know of her  
Is that my mother said she was sweetnatured

And full of equanimity; my sister's  
Memories of her in my sister's early childhood  
Seem to confirm this. And I know that my grandmother,

As a young girl, was given away to others,  
From one family with many children  
To another, cousins, or friends, kissing kin,

With none. Saunders is I guess the family name  
She was given into. My father looks "handsome and youthful."  
His shoes are brightly shining, and he's wearing

A dark vest and a vestchain under his coat.  
I'm puzzled about the straw hat that he's wearing,  
Since the women's coats (my grandmother's also wearing

A heavylooking coat, black, like her hat,  
Because she was widowed just a few years before)  
Look heavy, wintry, or at least autumnal.

The trees look thinly leaved, as if it were  
Late autumn, early spring, or winter in a place  
Where dead leaves cling to trees all winter long.



You cannot tell what weather or season it is.  
My mother, as in all these early pictures,  
Although in this one already having lost

Her girlish slimness, looks sexually alive,  
Full of energy, her hair dark, abundant,  
Her smile generous (though maybe less so than

In the pictures taken a few years earlier).  
Somewhere in this picture there is inscribed  
The source or secret, somewhere inscribed the cause,

Of the anxious motherly torment of disapproval,  
The torment not resisted by my father,  
Visited by my mother on my sister,

The baby in the picture, torment that was  
Perhaps in turn the cause of the alcoholism  
That, many years later, the baby in the picture

Won out over. But it's all unreadable  
In this charming family photograph which, somehow,  
Perhaps because of the blankness of the sky,

Looks Russian, foreign, of no country I know.

## LAKE

*by Tony Hoagland*

Late summer, we sit on the edge of the lake.  
Only this time, unlike a hundred times before,  
we keep our clothes on.

She says, Maybe you want to live on the freaking edge  
of the freaking unknown,  
but I want a goddamn life, goddamit.

The water is a rough, muddy jade  
and the texture of certain nautical paintings  
in which the painter has approached the canvas  
with a chopping motion of the brush.

While she is explaining what a brave little coward I am,  
while I am braced against the pelt  
and caustic sizzle of her voice,

I am watching the drama of two insects by our feet,  
one bug struggling to carry  
the much larger dead body of another  
into a crevice by a rock,

turning it this way, then that  
like a man trying to get a kite  
into the window of his car.

What goes unnoticed in the world is so astonishing.

I look up at her gorgeous, angry face.  
And all that I can do is wonder,  
How did I wind up in paradise?

*David Ferry's new collection, Of No Country I Know: New and Selected Poems and Translations, will be published this August by University of Chicago Press. Forthcoming as well are translations of The Eclogues of Virgil and The Epistles of Horace, both from Farrar, Straus & Giroux.*

*Tony Hoagland, a former fellow of the Fine Arts Work Center, has published two books of poetry: Sweet Ruin, and, in 1998, Donkey Gospel, from Graywolf Press. His work appears deeply, highly, and widely.*

## WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO COMPLAIN?

by Anne-Marie Levine

My aunt Claire told the story at dinner:  
she and my mother had found themselves  
with their old friend Max at a railway station  
somewhere in Europe, sometime after the war.  
Max's bags had somehow landed  
on the German side of the railway station.

The three of them had escaped the Holocaust in Europe.  
They all spoke many languages,  
they all did in those days.  
Max wanted his bags back, of course,  
but he didn't want to go over to the German side  
to get them. He didn't want to speak German either.  
So he asked my mother and my aunt  
to go over there for him.  
Typical Max, I said.

Oh no, said Claire, you don't understand.  
His grandparents committed suicide in Germany  
rather than leave.  
And what about your grandparents? I asked.  
It's not the same, Claire said.  
Our grandmother died immediately after  
they took her to the concentration camp.  
She died a natural death.  
That's not the same? I said.  
No, she said.

So she and my mother went over to the German side  
and my mother didn't want to speak German either,  
but she couldn't get the bags out in any other language,  
so finally she did speak German and she did get them out.  
Well, I said, it seems to me that you and my mother  
have as much reason for not wanting to go over there  
and do all that as Max did.  
No! she shouted. You're wrong! And what's more—  
you have very bad values.

*Anne-Marie Levine lives in New York City. She is the author of Euphoria, published by Provincetown Arts Press. Her poems have appeared most recently in Parnassus, Tin House, and American Letters and Commentary.*

## THE SPECTATOR

by Peter Campion

Our whole time there he stared at us: entranced  
already as we entered from the lobby.  
Seeing us as models of excellence.  
Or noticing something obviously  
going wrong between us. Maybe he,  
bound to his wheelchair in that dismal hotel,  
envied a luckiness, a freedom we  
represented. Or maybe he could tell,  
watching the way we held and moved our bodies  
in relation to each other's—for instance  
at the counter, my cutting by her hardly  
aware of her, showing my confidence:  
Lancelot paying for the sandwiches;  
or how at our table in the corner,  
she sat poking her straw, riling the fizz:  
Guinnevere musing on soda-water—  
maybe he guessed our talk would end in tears.

And it did. She asked me what was going on,  
I knew I'd say some things she wouldn't like,  
and she would feel ashamed ... When I was done,  
I made pathetic, self-effacing jokes,  
trying to cheer her, and she tried to laugh,  
but I could see her falling back inside,  
farther and farther into her self,  
leaving me almost glad  
I couldn't follow her in, staying instead  
distracted, looking around, seeing they had  
a book, a French philosopher I'd read,  
wedged in the bookshelf under replicas  
of third-rate paintings, and I took stupid  
pride in remembering the part where he says,  
"We picture no images unextended,  
thus we always perceive a thing in itself."

Then the man was approaching us,  
wheeling closer, emptying the junk on his tray  
in the trash-can, but making clear his purpose  
was staring at us. And he blocked our way  
out to the lobby as we tried to go  
—we had to weave around him, awkwardly.  
Begging us for something he wanted to know,  
he seemed to say to my girlfriend and me,  
"Mom. Dad. Is everything o.k.?"  
like a child with a parent's nervous laugh,  
or a parent raging in a childish way,  
"Why don't you fucking look at yourself?"

*Peter Campion is from the Boston area.  
His translation of Pierre De Ronsard  
recently appeared in AGNI.*



## OUR LADY OF INSOMNIA

*by Elaine Equi*

Don't you want  
to sleep with her?

With her hands  
that are two burning books.

With her lips chapped,  
raw with country music at 3 a.m.

With her hair a flag,  
her body a breathing radio.

She says everyone in the country  
is afraid.

She knows this from talking  
to the wrong numbers.

Tangled in the swan dive of her limbs,  
she is husband/wife/first true love.

I could get used to this, you think,  
meaning moonlight streaming through

bullet-holes in the wall.  
I could learn to call this home.

*Elaine Equi is the author of many books, including Surface Tension, Decoy, and, most recently, Voice-Over, all from Coffee House Press.*

## dungle sublime

*by Ronaldo V. Wilson*

her finger an elephant trunk discoils  
to slouch on a milk crate

to rub the crease  
of her polyester leg

she vanishes and i appear  
in the kennedy fried chicken  
window my blue shades faux silk trench coat  
a black fire

*suck my ass you blue faggot*

she screams my head strands  
on heat lamps and lumps of fried meat

last night i ate a center  
breast one thigh  
a roll

i mouth her a kiss  
what does she not hear  
my boots clapping?

this is the walk i take when i am hungry

i got two dimes in my pocket to buy  
a loosey cigarette  
and when i return all cobra and cagey  
a cherry tongue steams smoke  
out my face

*Ronaldo V. Wilson is a graduate of New York University's Creative Writing Program and the University of California at Berkeley. He is currently a doctoral student at the CUNY Graduate Center in English, where he focuses on race, sexuality, and the body in contemporary American poetry.*

## LITTLE DANCE OUTSIDE THE RUINS OF UNREASON

by Carl Phillips

Nothing about that life  
was incidental:

the night's routine of  
the night leaves, by the moon, being  
shadow-cast against the white sides of the small but

there

garage, say;

the heart—  
that it kept beating—

Nothing was ever itself  
only, or allowed to be:  
if a field,

then a field

of massacre, from which the bodies  
have but recently been  
lifted, the trampled

grasses just  
beginning their spring, back,

the drowse of the kill, after,

and the difficult-to-  
admit-to disappointment  
at the loss of them, carnage's  
bright details,

for what they meant of  
vulnerability,  
that softness which has seemed the body's  
greatest truth . . .

To look at you,  
looking that way—at me—  
How scarified it is,  
devotion's face—as from the labor of  
too long accepting

substitution

over what it fears has been  
nothing at all, certain

moments, of weakness.

Weakness, I think,  
defined us most. We all but made of it

a country—

Let it fall.

Take my hand.

(Singing)  
nothing unforgivable

(Singing)  
everything to forgive

*Carl Phillips is the author of four books, including From the Devotions (finalist for the 1998 National Book Award) and Pastoral, due out from Graywolf in 2000. A summer resident of Cape Cod, he teaches at Washington University, St. Louis.*



WISE COMMA SUZANNE

by Suzanne Wise

No sentence here.  
Just fragment or phrase.

A comma dividing names  
like a navel.

This body's upper half is Suzanne,  
two-syllabled, double-breasted, big-chested.

This voluptuousness is born in origin.

*Suzanne* comes from *lily*:  
scaly bulb erupting with tall stems,  
whorled leaves, and drooping  
bell-shaped flowers.

Suzanne sprouts from the white  
bank of the left hand  
margin, in mercurial shades  
of orange, cream, scarlet,  
even blue.

Meanwhile, the lower half, the base half,  
is, of course, Wise, and without limit.

Supposedly sage, grave, discerning,  
learned, pious, judicious, Wise—  
when attached to female—becomes wily  
and well-versed at magic.

This part is all fortune teller, witch, midwife.

This part is smarty pants  
without the pants,  
with skirts and stretch  
marks and other marks, and sex  
used like a divining rod.

Together (though divided by a pause)  
Suzanne Wise has been interrupted,  
as is her nature, as is the nature  
of the world taking precedence.

But Suzanne Wise would rather not be  
a complete sentence, completely  
sentenced. She prefers to be cut  
off from expectation, to be a free  
association associating with silence.

She has been written by some renegade  
grammarian who knows predicate  
is extraneous, an under-thing  
that halts the rub of word on word,  
of word on sticks and balls and arcs  
of punctuation: all the slick friction  
of meaning's excess.

And so Suzanne Wise is stripped  
down to her self and a half  
curl that hinges halves together,  
subjecthood swiveling  
without its hood.

And she bears that bareness  
like a shield.

*Suzanne Wise's first collection, The Kingdom of the  
Subjunctive, is forthcoming from Alice James Books next  
January. She lives in New York City.*

## TO BEGIN THIS WAY EVERY DAY

by Gail Mazur

at my desk, as my friend John recommends,  
natural as, say, laughing, is for him—  
his whole household still asleep,

his elderly black cat curled  
in dawn's warm oblong of sun,  
Harry's left hand dreaming toward

his somnolent floored guitar,  
Maria's morning visions wayward as lines  
of the story she's been conjuring

for a year in her room with its vista  
of bramble, scrub oak and dunes;  
her garden flailing, the last skeletal

spidery cleomes, the splashy crimson  
dahlias lashed to their green stakes  
against the Cape's September storms.

To begin this way, to take memories  
that strum me before I wake—birth cries,  
circus elephants, Chinese rocks—that lurk

and toss in my windy aching brain,  
then fall, their familiar names set  
somehow wrong, testing me to get them

right, to make sense or song of slant  
arrangements—could I begin there now,  
weightlessly, without deliberation?

When John wasn't writing poems, he said,  
*I miss the quirky way my mind works, or  
was it the way my mind quirks?*—

This drizzly morning, I like to picture him  
at his desk in Truro, to begin to think how  
fortunate we might seem, like gamblers,

browsing and tapping the muddled alphabet  
of keys, door closed hard on the heavy day's  
commands, nerve, or nothing that nameable

steering our hands; maybe for only one hour,  
this hour, risking what we won yesterday;  
alone, autonomous, capricious, free.

## MACHINES

by Robert Pinsky

Leather and brass, wood, forged or die-cut steel.  
Silicon, gold electrodes, chased gear and bronze pawl.  
Silver wing, Iron Horse, its hum or wail

Or white noise, whispering of molten soul  
Poured by the makers into the tiny grail  
Of escapement at my wrist. Or a roaring bull,

And I astride it, or inside at the wheel,  
The animate engine, a golem angel flail  
Thrashing the germ of spirit from its hull.

Or magnetic speakers, that ape the primate pull  
To lip the air, to voice matter—the tongue of will  
Cleaving the material to its euphoric call.

*Robert Pinsky is Poet Laureate of the United States. His collected poems, The Figured Wheel, were published in 1996. He has translated The Inferno of Dante, and is the author, most recently, of The Sounds of Poetry, all published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux.*

*Mazur recently completed her fourth book of poems, They Can't Take That Away From Me, which will be published by University of Chicago Press. She is the founding director of the Blacksmith House Poetry Series in Cambridge and Poet-in-Residence in the Emerson College MFA in Writing program.*



## MIND'S EYE

by Heather McHugh

The moon is a zero zooming in  
on strands of negligee—  
it has a mind to be webbed  
in neurostrata, stigma.

Lower in our purview, torrents  
tear across the floodgate's crossbar, where  
what was goes out into what is. How shallowly I loved you!  
The streaking downticks at the shineslide: outcome of  
upended quiver. Against the tide rise  
greenblack blades, a row athrob.  
The falls are brawling, mobs of suds,

mud in your eye. I may well  
burn to fly, but even light is bent.  
We will be sent downline. (It's not  
our substance pours away—it is our shine.)

## A MAN CAN'T BE

by Heather McHugh

accused of genocide  
until the very last  
of a kind is killed.

Accuse someone of that and you must know  
what kind of kind you've come to mean.  
You do a violence to some, you do  
a violence to all—and all at once.  
How wide a malice, iron-clad a politics  
must one espouse to love one's kind?  
World-class, or mind your own  
kin-can? In Chinese, shen; in Latin, genus  
(hence our sense of the general). Of homicide he's guilty

readily enough; you need just one,  
or some, or many, to be dead.  
Don't we love one dead man enough  
to cite a killer in his name? How many kinds  
of killing do we need? What kind of man  
knows every kind of man he is?  
To tell itself apart, man must be  
many. Also small:

through the garden's chill  
beneath our notice, mill a million  
quirky workers, children still. What speech  
shall we avenge today? The spirit  
has been analyzed, and it  
is breath. You can't lie  
about genocide:  
you can't tell each

from all of death.

*Heather McHugh's new collection of poems, The Father of the  
Predicaments, is due from Wesleyan/UPNE in September.*

## XENIA: STRANGER/GUEST

*their own flesh and blood  
and tinctures natural*  
—Herrick

by David Gewanter

I count your quick life by minute, day, and year,  
or by the tremble your head-pit makes  
beneath our shrinking family tree, where no son  
meets his grandfather  
and fungus soaks the heartwood to molasses—  
One night        you plucked

the forewaters and made your mother groan, crawling  
backward from bed under a Hercules  
of pain, will, nails in my arm as you hiccupped  
a first prank, knotting  
your purple tie neatly round your throat,  
Joy's curtain        of flesh

parting on the near-suicide: we held your  
pink prune face, held you like a torah packed  
with nitro. Cuckoo-boy, you muscled others  
from the clotting test tube  
till only your heart-light flashed the screen....  
Could I be        all father

and fill the line, not wince when you call everyone  
*Dada*, stumbling after strangers...as I once  
stalked across the green linoleum, a baby  
Frankenstein reaching for hands  
that pulled back to make me lurch further,  
Anger        Absurdity

my Janus-parents, the house of *in loco*—  
That first memory rinses the cobweb  
cloth to a spectral mask, meaning  
rewoven in the day's shuttling luck  
—until any moment means anything.  
The Book        of Home

reads *Praise* one day and *Blame* the next:  
we write yours with "no" and "don't" and "wait"  
yet you'll become its hero. Maybe some stranger  
clouded in the woods will touch you—  
a love beyond ours—and so, disguised by love  
you'll cleave your way        to your wife.

—That was Odysseus, flanked by father and son,  
chopping down men. Your son may not meet me  
(we tear our books) but show him this mottled tree.  
Wands of the tree-men have jizzed the roots,  
I should grow on the day of my death.  
So I pray)        should you.

## FATHER'S DAY

*after the painting "Icaro" by Benjamin Canas*  
by Sean Enright

Daedalus drank some ouzo before he went  
but left a little in the bottle  
His name means "maker"  
A saw from a shark's backbone  
A labyrinth that unfolds

the way a partridge courts  
You tease her with a false start  
run dead-on at a tree  
and finally limp into the bridal blind

*you gotta get in to get out*

Daedalus knows a thing or two about those birds  
*They're looking for their arms*  
They fled the path and hid shaking in the brush

He and his son must have killed hundreds of them  
Sheaves of their feathers covering the tiles  
Primaries and secondaries  
The quills could be woven together  
but they grafted the coverts  
with wax into the pores  
so hair would train around them

It is important that Icarus stay calm  
He hobbles to the window  
The sky has settled in the sea

To see one's father thrash up  
into air and out of sight  
is to want to be different        not wise

First a sip of that stuff though  
It struck his father's eyes like a light  
but then his wings took hold

*Sean Enright's poems have appeared most recently in the  
Southern Poetry Review. He teaches at the Writer's Center  
in Bethesda, Maryland.*

*David Gewanter's book of poems, In the Belly, won the John  
C. Zacharis First Book Award from Ploughshares. With Frank  
Bidart he is co-editor of The Collected Poems of Robert  
Lowell (Farrar, Straus & Giroux), due out this year. He  
teaches at Georgetown University and is a Witter Bynner  
Fellow at the Library of Congress for 1999.*



## A DREAM, 5-5-98

by Amy Thomas

In the dream white tiles replaced  
the yellowed peeling wallpaper  
steeped in decades of smoke.  
Now gleams of metal instruments,  
half-hidden in doorways, flashed  
like tiny brilliant birds  
caged in glass-walled gardens  
as symbols of life and light,  
and lightheartedness.

A child again, looking up  
from the marble-rolling game,  
I saw my grandfather  
slouch down the narrow hall,  
rustling the light like leaves  
of the nickel tree—silver  
near-transparent discs  
trembling on thread stems.

I'd seen him disappear  
into the mystery of  
that room so many times,  
but in the dream's system  
the twist of smoke wafting out  
and click of the door's latch  
were codes that, waking, I  
deciphered only by  
the feelings catalyzed  
and left to smoulder. A smoky  
confusion linked the fragments  
of my memories, which  
clarified with new  
meaning in the dream's  
light—the way veins  
of leaves blown back against  
the sun go translucent.

*Amy Thomas lives in the Boston area.  
She received her MA from Boston  
University this summer.*

## THE FIELD

by Tom Sleigh

Once I left the room  
of the boardinghouse  
I dreamed, I saw at the end  
of a long fallow field

the derricks and cranes  
like spider-woven filament  
against the bay  
curdling in the sun.

The clods of earth  
beneath my shoes  
crumbled at each step  
and reeked of ammonia,

that friable breaking up  
like a quavering voice  
leaping to attack,  
laddering up and down

a dissonant scale  
so pure, so atonal  
that it shivered all through me  
as if I were a tuning fork

vibrating through  
the far-echoing afternoon.  
On and on my feet  
kept moving, the softly

combusting clods  
cushioning each step  
as before me the field spread  
always larger and more still,

the dream taking me  
wherever I would go,  
my black shadow  
plunging and lifting

like a plough—  
until I was borne up  
by the buoyant exhaustion  
of my path down

the furrows that flowed out  
like a never-ending note  
floating on the breath  
of a singer whose eyes shut

and who feels himself lifted  
past the spotlight hall  
into a solitude beyond  
appeal or recall.

## OCCASIONAL POEM

for the Fairchilds

by Rebecca Wolff

Nobody lives in your sleep.  
Not in the dream you dream, for all your selves  
are represented in your dreaming, every character  
is you and you are too.  
We are a flock.

And in your family  
you are everyone  
though now we dream of emigrating  
out of there. Maybe you all need  
each other now.

Perhaps we kept her here. No one dies in your sleep,  
there is a rumor that if we dream  
of dying we do die. And if she died

in their sleep then no one is the worse  
for passing in and out of states  
of rest, and love's transition is from pasture  
to pasture.

*Rebecca Wolff is a native of New York and Truro. Her  
poems have appeared in Grand Street, Paris Review,  
Colorado Review, and elsewhere. She is the editor of  
FENCE, a journal of poetry, fiction, criticism, and art.*

*Tom Sleigh's new collection, The Dreamhouse, will be  
published by University of Chicago Press this fall; his  
translation of Euripides' The Return of Herakles is  
forthcoming from Oxford University Press in 2000. He  
recently received the Shelley Memorial Award from the  
Poetry Society of America.*

# Third Tuesdays

by Stanley Elkin

*When Stanley Elkin, one of the great tragicomic authors of the century, died in 1995, he was at work on a new novel, Third Tuesdays. He left only the first few chapters and notes mapping out the rest. Reading the following excerpt from chapter one is like finding a last gold coin at the bottom of the chest.*

—Ivy Meeropol

party was in full swing when the Lunts arrived. Or operational anyway. And while many of the 75 or so people already there might have hesitated to designate such a collection of returning family, friends, colleagues, and handful of interns, residents, and children as a "party" exactly, from the sound and look of things, the dozen and a half simultaneous conversations, the general casualness of most of their Sunday morning trim, from their thick, stonewashed denim pants and spiffy, outdoorsy, designer shirts, to the tailored suits, tweeds, and cashmeres of the women, any stranger plunked down among them just then in one of the immense house's airy, oversized rooms, would have assumed he'd been thrust into a sort of convention and might have been forgiven the assumption that almost everyone there was known to everyone else. In a way, it was true. Or, if not exactly known to one another then sprung whole and entire from some common demographical tree. Indeed, it seemed even to Lunt that the room's general high spirits could be accounted for on the basis of some longstanding, shared familiarity, if nothing else.

It had, no matter the circumstances, the inclusive, clubby feel of a reunion. Even the chancellor, whom Lunt had never seen in other than the conservative mufti of his tailored, double-breasted blue suits, today looked relaxed as an anchorman dressing down. Most of them did. They had the look of people at a brunch the day after a wedding.

He'd nudged Marion. "The funeral baked lox, eggs, and onions."

"Just don't make a pig of yourself."

Lunt smiled. "You know why I like coming here? I like coming here because they don't care if I make a pig of myself. It's the horn of plenty here. It's Jubilee, a great big old Beulah land. There's milk and honey."

"You're going to make a pig of yourself, aren't you?"

"I have every intention," Lunt said. "Don't fucking lecture me."

In fact, he did have every intention. And wrote it off not so much to any sense of entitlement he might have built up over his years of attendance at Eleanor's and Eli's salons as to his conviction that he and Marion had fallen among exemplars of hospitality, people who'd worked the *mi casa/su casas* into something as apparently effortless as an art form. In the almost 30 years since he and Marion had been paying their calls, Lunt felt there couldn't have been a time when he might have hesitated to ask if they'd take them in for a night, give them fresh sheets, make up their beds.

It made no difference to Lunt why Marion had urged him to cool it. He knew why. The man was dead. Marion thought that pigging out would constitute a violation.

"Hey," Lunt said, as though she knew he knew her objections, "it wouldn't. Our trouble, dearie, is that we don't understand class."

"Maybe you don't."

"Come on," he said, "it's a great occasion. Don't start with me." Marion, Lunt thought, has no feel for the Sunday hungers. Your basic egg sup with bacon, buttered-toast, coffee-and-danish life. An ascetic herself she had neither sympathy for nor patience with the other fellow's destructive, exorbitant tastes. Ten minutes after they'd first met, Lunt knew, Eli had sized him up as a sybarite who couldn't have kept a secret if his life depended on it, Marion as one who would take at least a dozen with her to the grave. The goddamn guy was like some infallible fucking fortune cookie and, though he'd admired and trusted the man, there was at least a part of Ray Lunt that was relieved that the obsequies (only the immediate family, only a few longer known, better loved friends) were done (he did not even know where Eli was buried, or, for that matter, whether he'd been cremated and his ashes scattered) and, exemplar of hospitality or not, that he wouldn't be there to witness Ray in the act of pigging out or hear him sing one more aria from his extensive repertoire of self. Though he knew what he could expect, he said this to Marion.

"You're an asshole," she told him.

"And you're not?"

They came to the front door which was, of course, open, and Ray had the decency to adjust his demeanor. Or began to anyway had he not seen at the last minute that he'd have been using up perfectly good solemnity not on the widow but on Rebecca Morris, an older old timer than even himself, neither blood relative nor colleague but one, like he and Marion,



whose claim on the Wolffs was as exiguous and mysterious as their own. Rebecca, a small woman, slim as a paper cut, who each time he saw her put Ray in mind of the City of New York, Borough of Manhattan, whose pervasive, basic black wardrobe (her skirts and slacks, her suits and scarves) and high, dependably present perfumes, were, for Ray, the very standard of Jewish Seventh Avenue Eastern.

"I'll be damned," he said, "it's the sophisticated lady."

"Did you hear what happened?"

"No. What happened?"

"Eleanor had a stroke."

"What? When?"

"Is she all right?"

"Not even an hour ago. They think so. Three of the boys went along in the ambulance to the hospital with her. They called Jimmy. Jimmy says she's still in Emergency. They apparently think it was very mild."

"Jesus Christ."

"I know," Rebecca said.

"All that pressure and stress. I mean that's got to have at least *something* to do with it. The man's dead, what, a month and a half? All that waiting on 'closure.' Closure. He died almost two months ago. They should've had his memorial service right after the funeral. Why'd she wait so long?"

"It was right around Christmas," somebody said, one of two or three people who'd started to gather when Rebecca told them about Eleanor's stroke. "Lots of folks were all over the world when Eli passed away. She wanted to wait until they got back."

"Yeah," Ray said, "now she's laid out in the ER. You want closure? I'll give you closure!"

"It couldn't have had anything to do with stress, I think," said one of the gawkers. Not someone Ray recognized, he was wearing a suit of an odd, thickly pebbled material, tiny nubs of dark reddish threads mixed with shades of black and gray. It seemed foreign, expensive. Lunt suspected it was custom made. He was probably some world-class physician or other. Ray didn't recognize him as one of yesterday's speakers. (He was a little put out, Lunt was, that *he* hadn't been asked to speak. He hadn't mentioned it to Marion. She'd already told him he was an asshole.) "Probably," the stranger continued, "when they've run all their tests, it will turn out to have something to do with some pre-existing condition."

"Was anyone able to speak to Eleanor?" Rose Benham asked.

"Was she talking? Could she speak?"

"Yes, how did she present?" Ray Lunt said, looking at the physician with the opinion and using the medical term.

"Well no one was here," one of them said.

"No one? She was alone?"

"Well the boys, of course. Their wives. I suppose the caterers."

At which point one of the caterers from the large gray truck passed among them with a tray of interesting looking hors d'oeuvres. Rebecca dabbed at the edges of her lips with a napkin,

shook her head, and held up a bone china plate of chewy, miniature latkes. (There were dollops of sour cream and apple sauce in tiny paper cups.) That's what Ray wanted. About a quintuple stack, but when the tray reached him he was told they were all out. He had half a mind to say that if they still had the makings back in the chuck wagon he'd be eternally grateful if they'd whip up some more. He pointed to some elaborate pig-in-the-blanket things instead and by the time he realized he didn't like it the guy was gone.

They don't give you enough time, Lunt thought, some of his Sunday hungers blunted by his disappointment.

"How they found out about the stroke was really rather remarkable," put in the chap who'd been relaying to them whatever hard information there was. It occurred to Lunt that spokesmen like this were ubiquitous, mysteriously available. They seemed to be thrown up by the situation itself, and Lunt wondered what lack there was in him that he'd never been one of them. He gave himself long odds that, later, he'd probably not be able to keep himself from spilling this to Marion, too, along with the depth of the anger he felt that the latkes had all been passed out by the time the fellow with the tray had gotten round to him, or, if he remembered, the envy he'd felt that he'd not been asked to say anything at Eli's memorial, or even the little flare of resentment that went up when the doc in the queer, expensive suit had punctured his little pressure/stress theory when he'd offered it. "It was incredible really," the official spokesman was saying, "Eleanor was on the phone to one of her nieces in Philadelphia when it happened. The niece had called her aunt to apologize for not being able to make it out for the memorial service yesterday. Her husband was down with the flu and she was reluctant to leave him. She'd called to apologize and suddenly started to cry. Well, you all know Elly's graciousness. There she was comforting the comforter, telling her that these things happened and that she wasn't to give it a moment's thought.

She mentioned that she'd be in Philadelphia next month to deliver the Pritzger Sociology in Psychiatry Studies Lecture at the university and invited the niece and her husband to come to her hotel and have dinner with her. She was just giving the girl her exact dates when she suddenly stopped talking.

"At first the niece thought they'd been disconnected, or that the line had gone dead, and she kept repeating 'Aunt Eleanor, Aunt Eleanor.' She says she heard a peculiar gasping sound at this end. Without even giving it a second thought she immediately called 911 in St. Louis and explained what had happened, and that she was

afraid something was wrong with her aunt. She gave 911 the name, address, and phone number here and asked them to send out an ambulance. The ambulance got here before any of the family discovered her."

"What presence of mind," someone marveled and, before he could repress it, Lunt experienced a fresh bout of disappointment with himself.

"Excuse me," he said, "just how do you happen to know all this?"

"I asked Jimmy," the spokesman said. "Jimmy told me."

"Sure," Lunt said, "sure they came lickety-split. Once they heard the address they probably wet their pants getting here."

"You're a cynical guy, Raymond," Jarvis Lewis said.



JOAN ELKIN, WINTER (DETAIL), 1988  
(PAINTING OF STANLEY ELKIN, BY THE AUTHOR'S WIFE)

Ray smiled at Jarvis to take the edge off. "Everywhere I go," he said, "I'm Devil's advocate." Marion glared at him.

Some of them shuffled uncomfortably, others walked away, and Ray, the interesting center of their bemused, detached engagement, was left standing with people he did not recognize. He might have been a patient, they could have been on rounds.

"I flatter myself about being Devil's advocate," Ray told them. "Actually I haven't the slightest idea of what to say to any of you.



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Excuse me, I think I'll just work my way over to that buffet table, try my luck."

The moment he moved it was as though they'd been released from a spell. Instantly they were engaged in several discrete conversations, like people in a theater lobby, say, during an intermission at a play. To his credit, he thought, straining to listen, he wasn't upset they'd forgotten all about him and were already talking of other things—their flights, the grant proposals they'd interrupted, their backlog of work.

He was very impressed by these important out-of-towners. They were taking their leave. Their suitcases and garment bags were lined up in the large entrance hall, and thick, fur-collared overcoats, great tweedy capes, and intricately looped, belted rainwear like the trenchcoats of spies lay across them like sealed orders. Lunt imagined them in the luxurious hotels where they'd be staying, taking continental breakfast in leather club chairs and going over the international edition of the *Herald-Tribune*, eating the bakery of the country, drinking freshly squeezed juice out of goblets and sipping the rough blends of rich, dark coffees. He'd have to tell that to Marion, too. It might mitigate at least a little of his unconscionable behavior that morning.

And thought, in what was still Eli's house, addressing the whereabouts-unknown, mysteriously-disposed of dead man at once mysteriously reconstituted, too: It's a nice question, ain't it, Doc, if I decide not to tell? If instead I allow them all to play me where I lie? And checked himself. Eli is dead. Along with every other subject, this was a topic they would never cover. Eli is dead, and has other fish to fry. And, amazed, felt himself a little less alive now, too. Taken much aback by his slight remove from the world, not so much frightened as abruptly lonely, quite literally bereft of self, the steady-state regard in which he usually held himself. Eli was never *really* his friend. None of them was. He looked toward their tall, formal, dignified chancellor, half a head higher than anyone in the room. He'd never noticed before how powerfully the man's homeliness seemed to fix him in place, a factor in his benevolence and power and character. He and Betsy had been there when the Lunts arrived. It seemed to Ray that this was the record. Even the out-of-towners were peeling off, yet the chancellor was actually piling food onto his plate. It was the most intimate thing Lunt had ever seen him do. In a way, the Easts seemed already to have stayed on longer at Eli's and Eleanor's than they did during the three hours it took from the time they served drinks in the library until their guests looked at the seating charts, found their assigned places, went into dinner, and retired to the living room for brandy and civilization before being hustled out the door at the university dinners they hosted. Then, of course, everything was scripted, from Betsy East's and the chancellor's greetings at the door right down to the ritual of the gracious, tapped crystal toasts and genteel goodnights at the end of the evening. In the more than quarter century since first coming to the university, Lunt had been invited to the chancellor's residence

maybe five or six times. (It wasn't his real residence, merely the one he used as a pied-a-terre for university do's on the dozen or so high occasions of the academic year. Lunt had seen his real residence, at least its full-color, double-truck representation in *Town and Country*, compared to which the one Ray went to on those ceremonial, three-hour, tripartite evenings, big and grand as it was, was only a sort of fishing camp, a sort of *dacha*, and served the chancellor and his wife like a kind of residential mad money. It surprised Lunt that a barely-in-control fellow like himself wasn't patted down each time he got within 50 feet of the door, or that Bill East hadn't declared himself off-limits. Such a place, such a place seemed restricted as a country club.) It was touching to see him here. The jacket and sports shirt were signals he'd come as a friend and not on university business. Lunt hoped that when he died Marion would get half the treatment, but knew it wasn't in the cards. The best they could expect (assuming that death didn't dissolve the marriage) was a polite note. Catching Lunt stare at him, the chancellor smiled and nodded, mouthing Ray's name. Lunt, striving for class, nodded almost imperceptibly back. He might, recognized in public, have been acknowledging someone only distantly known to him by raising his hand in the general direction of his hat and platonically touched it.

"Chancellor" his lips mimed in starchy lip-sync.

The chancellor seemed puzzled.

"I'm one, two, three times an asshole," Lunt sang in his head to a tune no one there would recognize, and began, in his head, to dance to it, a slow, sidelong shuffle, surprised to notice he was actually moving, aimlessly drifting, rather like a piece washed from the main. He glanced about to see if Europe were the less. Nope. Apparently not even Marion's the less, he thought, floating directly across his wife's line of sight without the faintest sign he'd registered on her consciousness. He might have been invisible, Lunt thought. If I were a snake I'd a bit her. And dragged his purloined, in-plain-view ass another 90 or so feet toward the big staircase in the main hall. Tentatively, as though testing hot bath water, he raised a shoe to the first tread, raised the other, and discovered he was climbing the stairs to the second floor. He looked behind him to see if anyone were watching. He was socially terrified, scared out of his pants and, briefly, Lunt flashed on 50-year-old dreams of public nakedness, caught in the cookie jar redhandedness. While he was still surveying the guests from his superior vantage point just below the first landing—How high I am, he marveled, I could be in a county courthouse—he was torn between continuing the rest of the way or going back down. Talk about your off-limits, talk about your out-of-bounds, talk about your posted, thoroughly private property. I feel, he thought, like a goddamn crime scene!

Now, achieving the first landing, he felt he'd arrived at a sort of base camp. From here he could take stock, consider his options, map out, should he decide to go for it, his final assault on the



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second floor. Lunt, vertiginous with nerves and guilt, wondered how someone like himself, a tenured, chaired professor in a not inconsiderable department at a not inconsiderable university, could be made to feel as fish-out-of-water and, well, naughty, through the simple act of going upstairs.

Well, he thought, the damage is done, and made a seemly, stately dash up the rest of the stairs, already rehearsing his alibis: the downstairs johns were all occupied; he'd been sent to retrieve something some visiting, elderly relation had left on a table in the second-floor hallway. He discarded the alibi almost at once. What if there weren't a table? What if there were and nothing was on it? What if there were, something was on it, but he was unable to find the visiting, elderly relation? Ray knew he'd be unable to get away with even a likely story. Maybe he should settle for the runs, cramps, the need to find somewhere private to puke.

"Thank you for coming," someone said to him.

"Jimmy?"

Ray knew it was a member of the immediate family. Judging by his size and sweet broad face, the look of his undistinguished clothes, it was as if, dressing even further down than the rest of them, he'd deliberately chosen to wear workshirts, menial pants, the picked-over garments of Veteran's Village, to put guests like Lunt at their democratic ease. He bore a resemblance to Eli. It was *probably* Jimmy.

"Yes," he said, "thank you for coming."

Lunt, who lived deprived of most sensory input and half believed his brain might be skimming with some sort of Alzheimer's of the out-of-sight, out-of-mind always felt equally pleased and surprised whenever he managed to match a name with a face, affably smiled. "Sorry about your dad," he said, smiling from ear to ear. "Sorry about your mother's stroke," he grinned.

The kid, distracted, seemed not to have noticed the wild impropriety of Lunt's dopey demeanor and Lunt, not so far gone as to be unappreciative, forced himself forcefully into it, smiled as though he were genuinely glad to see this kid, and sought to convey to the young man broad, beaming surprise, as if to say, *goshdarn*, fancy meeting you here! *Goldarned*, what the hell are you doing on the second floor?

Lunt rushed to explain that he wasn't sure he'd have recognized him if Sophisticated Lady hadn't mentioned his name earlier, and someone else too—that spokesman they'd hired. "It's the same in my classes," Lunt said. "It takes me half the semester to remember my students' names. If I didn't eat up a few minutes class each time calling the roll whenever we meet I might never remember them."

Jimmy heard him out and then started to go over the same ground the sophi...—Rebecca—Rebecca had already covered and, in even greater detail, the same stuff the spokesman guy had dished out. Lunt had it by heart now and imagined himself, charged with the duty of history, fit to recapitulate the story to parties yet un-

known. Eleanor's stroke would not be lost to the mists of legend. Like all the hard core of catastrophe or, if it *did* turn out to be mild, of embarrassing moments either, this one would go down in the books as if it had been notarized.

Ray guessed the kid was still blitzed from shock—his dad's death, his mother's stroke, his own sudden 11th-hour impressment and elevation to host at the now pointless party for 100 or so invited guests with no more purpose to their presence than slamming down drinks and signing the extempore guest book, an unused examination booklet Naomi Rosenberg had found in her purse and left on the dining room table for the consolors to sign when they put food down on their plates. Each page in the blue book was inscribed with its own individual Miss Marp, a cartoon dachshund Naomi drew on her outgoing mail, cocktail napkins, all over her blackboards, the butcherpaper-covered tables of West End coffee houses, restaurants, and even the last page of her students' tests and papers, up to and including their doctoral dissertations. She probably signs checks and credit card slips with the damn things thought Lunt (who hated the trivialized animal and wondered how such a cynical, aggressively pessimistic woman had ever fixed upon so improbable an icon as her toy dog, with all its up-front eagerness or melancholy, wagging its limited repertoire of mood swings at you with a flick of its tail or a downcast droop to its eyes and tail and tongue, for a soul signature), and had at first willfully declined to memorialize his two cents worth of cheery well wishes for the stricken Eleanor: "Elly, throwing a stroke was one hell of a way to get out of going to your party." "Eats were delicious. Wish you were here." It was Jimmy who'd put the pen in his hand: "Get well soon, Eleanor. Love, Ray. Marion says ditto."

Jimmy stood by proudly as people signed his mother's makeshift greeting card, solemnly promising that when his brothers returned from the intensive care unit he'd hand deliver it personally.

Jimmy, Lunt now remembered, though the father of three, was the baby Wolff, the youngest of the four boys and the only one who wasn't a doctor or scientist. Indeed, Lunt had no clear idea what he did for a living, though he seemed to recall that during the Viet Nam war he'd had some improbable blue collar job in San Francisco.

"Are you still out in California?" Lunt asked.

"Yes sir. Sure am."

"Still in the same field?"

"Yes sir."

"Please, Jimmy, not so formal. You don't have to call me sir."

"Thank you, but I don't know your name," Jimmy said. "Excuse me," he said, "I see some of my other guests. Make yourself at home." He moved off in the direction of some people just now cresting the top of the stairs.

Ray, staring after him, stung as if a wound had been inflicted, felt pangs of envy. What, he thought, must it have been like to have had the run of this house? Though he'd been coming to the Wolff's for years and considered himself a

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regular, practically a charter member of the Third Tuesday salons, this was the first time he'd ever been on the second floor. He and Marion had dined at the Wolffs, had watched the Carter/Ford debates on the Wolff's large screen TV in their oversized family room, sat, at least in the early days of Eli Wolff's illness, around their huge kitchen table dipping, double dipping, great ice cream-sized scoops of bright scrambled eggs (with all the makings: bacon, green onions, exotic herbs and condiments, sweet pink slabs of sliced ham) from large, warm chafing dishes set on an immense Lazy Susan in the center of the table like a ride in a playground. They, all the saloners, had the run of the first floor, the grounds and swimming pool, universal carte blanche, in fact, except for the mysterious sickroom that Eli had had built for himself off the kitchen once he acknowledged he was no longer able to walk and was too unstable even to ride the stair glide up the stairs to his bedroom (his little, customized railway removed the day it ceased being functional for him, along with, in their time, the freestanding aisles of parallel bars he'd once used for support as he lumbered from room to room between them like some gravity stricken gymnast, and all his various wheelchairs and recliners, as if the course of Eli's illness could be charted through a history of the acquisition and disposal of the special aids and equipment he'd purchased over the years, signing up for all the bells and whistles of the handicapped life. Once Lunt had even been invited to look in on the sickroom itself, Eli's privileged sanctum sanctorum, Eli leading the way on his Amigo, Lunt following behind the one-man traffic jam up to its doorless doorway from which he could see the hospital bed on which Eli slept, all its electronic gear and control panels, its doodads and cunning stowed spaces like hidden wardrobes, lights, basins and toilets in a train compartment.

I guess it's true what they say, he thought, looking after Jimmy who at this remove he could see was making the same ritualized, cynical fuss he'd offered Ray earlier, blood really is thicker than water. At these privileged altitudes anyway. Now he'd been cut by Jimmy he was more envious than ever, and high up on the second floor he tried to pound imaginary warmth back into his body with imaginary hugs and stomps.

"Don't," he remembered Eli warning him that time he'd stood at the entrance to his bespoke, special room, "get ill unless you can afford it."

Without his noticing her come up, Rebecca Morris was suddenly beside him. "Strange being here without either Eli or Eleanor."

"Jeez," Ray said, "you startled me. You're too slender to sneak up on people."

"Well it is," she said. "Very strange."

"Creepy."

"I feel like a looter."

"Yes."

It there was anything in the *Times* I missed

I did too."

"I looked every day for weeks. I even scanned the little alphabetized listings below the obits, the ones you have to pay for."

"I know. Me too."

"They're not trying to keep it quiet, do you suppose?"

"What quiet? There's prize winners from the four corners."

"That's true," said the sophisticated lady.

"How do they know?" Lunt said. "I never figured that out. Somebody buys it on a Tuesday it's in Wednesday's paper with a write-up."

"I know," she said. "They had Bill's. My kids didn't phone it in. I didn't."

"The funeral director?"

Rebecca shrugged.

"Maybe there's death designated stringers up and down the country, the highways and byways."

"Your guess is as good as mine," she said.

"I mean my chair isn't even endowed. It's paid for out of the general funds but there's guys dead in the *Times* every day with less going for them than me. Star of the game, Salesman of the year, Soldier of the month. Why don't we make a pact? If I go before you do you see to it the *Times* hears about it. If you go before me I'll do the same."

Lunt saw that Naomi Rosenberg was one of the women who had joined Jimmy for what was shaping up as the second tour. He nudged his friend. "Did the Chancellor write anything? Did you happen to notice?"

"They both did."

"They both did? Both of them?"

"Yes."

"Wow."

"I'm telling you," Rebecca Morris said.

"What did he write? What did bitsy Betsy write?"

"I didn't exactly stop to memorize it. I've got some class for Christ's sake."

He began to hum "Sophisticated Lady."

"Will you stop that? What's wrong with you anyway?"

"Of course you didn't stop to memorize it," Lunt said. "The gist, the drift."

"Why don't you ask Naomi? She seems to know everything."

"Speak of the devil," Ray Lunt said when, as if on cue, Naomi appeared before them.

"You are such a fool," Naomi said.

"And you're not?" Naomi wearily rolled her eyes. Had they had this discussion? No, that was Marion. She called me an asshole. Lunt thought sadly of sunk ships, of heavily eared walls, of the flies on them. So she'd heard this too, eh?

"Ray was wondering what Betsy and the Chancellor wrote in your blue book."

"I'm sorry," she said sweetly, "that's privileged information."

"You see? You see?" Ray snapped. "Do you see how she does? She deliberately sets you up and then, when you bite, she springs this privileged information shit. 'I'm not at liberty to say.' 'I made a promise, I took a holy vow.'"

"Would you please hold your voice down? This is a house of mourning."

"Glad to see you," Jimmy said. "Thank you for coming."

"How do you know my wife called me an asshole? How did you come by that information? Or is this insider trader stuff too?"

"Oh Ray," she said, "everyone knows you're an asshole."

Lunt turned to his host. "We've met," he growled, "we've been introduced. Sorry about your old man, sorry your ma had a stroke. Sorry, very sorry. What can I say? If there's anything I can do, anything at all."

"That's very kind," Jimmy said, "but there's nothing."

"Say," Ray Lunt said, "this is the first time I've ever been up here. Can you give me an idea what room this is?"

"Ray!" Rebecca said.

"What's wrong with you," Naomi demanded, "are you drunk? You've driven him off."

"Eat shit," Lunt said reasonably.

"I'm not up to this, kids," Rebecca said. She was out of there.

"Are you satisfied?"

Oddly, he was. It was good to go public with your resentments, not let them pile up, or go skulking about juggling ragged psychologicals, struggling to hold what Eli would have called his "humors" in place. He was satisfied, Lunt was, and felt what successful flashers were supposed to feel when everything—shock, surprise, timing—came together for them in the park.

"You're leaving me here?"

"What are you, lost? Go down the way you came up."

"I'm losing it, Naomi. I'm falling downstairs fast."

"The one I feel sorry for is Marion."

"Take her to lunch."

She actually bared her teeth. "Of course," Lunt said, "I know your dog wouldn't be drawn dead in that expression, but if you're looking to develop her as a character you could do worse than lend her that snarl."

"What?"

"I said—"

"I heard what you said. How long have we known each other?"

"We go back."

"We do," she said, "we go back, we've been introduced." Lunt, relenting, waited for her to go on. He loved being quoted, to hear echoes of his remarks returned to him in conversation. "Yet you still don't know anything about me, do you? Miss Marp is a male. A *male*. That's the whole irony. I can forgive you almost anything, anything, but not that. That you can laser in on self to the extent you do yet find it impossible to take in so plain a thing as the sex of your best friend's dog!"

I'm in late middle age, Lunt thought, and everybody I know, those who ain't dead or home from school for the day with the stroke, is psychologically impaired.

"Your best friend, Naomi? Your best friend?"

"I always thought so. I love you."



"Oh yes. Love. Right. Aren't you ashamed to use such words? Why are you such a liar?"

"I love you."

"Oh yes," he said. "And 'Pinocchio' is the best movie ever made, Pee Wee Herman is a genius, and *Little Dorrit* is Dickens's greatest novel."

"Of course."

"Of course? Of course? But costume dramas are anathema to you? 'Pinocchio' is a costume drama, goddamn it, '*Little fucking Dorrit* is! Why? Can you tell me *why*?"

"Why what?"

"Why you hate costume dramas? What's wrong with costume dramas?"

"I come out of Rousseau's overcoat on this point. I hate hypocrisy, I hate it when someone wraps himself up in some little time warped flag of self and screams 'Look at me, look at me.' I can't stand people pretending to be what they're not."

"Well," Lunt said, "why do you rent movies? Aren't you hypocrites every time they recite a line?"

"Yes. Absolutely. If they have to put on a costume. If they're pretending to fool me. I don't in the least mind hypocrisy in real life. Hypocrisy is fun in real life. Most of the hypocrites I know don't pretend to fool me. They really mean to gain something from it. Games, puzzles, and costumes. That's what I hate."

He could not believe he argued with her about such things. He could not believe she actually held such opinions. When she vaporized about her theories he wanted to beat her up or run over her in his car. By and large they occupied the same political positions though he'd given up on Clinton and she still held him up as a hero of politics, the world's last best hope. She infuriated Lunt although why he gave a damn about her smug pronouncements was a matter of some wonder to him.

"Please hold it down, will you," Marion said. "Don't you know you're shouting and the Chancellor can hear you?"

"She was going on again about 'Pinocchio.' She was going on again about costume dramas."

"I didn't bring it up."

"She comes out of Rousseau's overcoat. That's what she told me. Right out of Rousseau's overcoat. She said what the Chancellor wrote on Eleanor's get well card is privileged information."

"He thinks Marp is a bitch!" Naomi said.

"She called me an asshole! Ask Rebecca, she heard her."

"Ray, I didn't call you an asshole. I said everyone *knows* you're an asshole."

"And then she says she loves me? Oh boy," Ray said, "you should have heard her on the subject of hypocrites. *She's* the hypocrite! *She is!*"

Marion looked from one to the other. She shook her head.

"Would you like to know what she said about you, Marion? She said, 'The one I feel sorry for is Marion.'" He waited for Marion, whose flaw was the pride she took in having none, to explode. When she failed to react, Lunt, betrayed by

expectation and deprived of the momentary satisfaction of resentments taken public and the center stage life, was at a loss to explain why his little firecrackers and cherry bombs had failed to go off. Naomi would have a theory but Naomi was the *last* person he could turn to now. He had an idea that it was because anger was an inside job, a one-man show, and that when it spread it lost its purity and degenerated into shouting matches, as vitiated by confrontation as that flasher in the park being himself flashed at the very moment he opened his overcoat.

Not a bad theory, he thought. Were they on better terms he would have offered it to Naomi then and there. He liked having picked up on her overcoat image, feeling his made better sense than her Rousseau's overcoat mumbo-jumbo.

But it was enough for him to have had the idea. He was calmer now and had better things to do with his time. He made the hand signal for time to the two women. He lowered his voice. "What do you mean he can hear us?" he asked his wife. "Did he hear what we said?"

"You are such a baby," Naomi said.

"Don't start," he said. "Did he?"

"He heard you shouting, he heard something was rotten in Denmark," Marion said.

"That's awful," Ray said.

"You're not in any *trouble*, Ray," Marion said. "It isn't as if you were in any *trouble*."

"Of course not," Lunt said but couldn't resist adding, "but what must he think of Naomi?" Then, as though nothing had happened and offering his arm, he started off in the direction of the staircase. "All right," he said, "here's our story. We tell them we were splitting up the estate. We'll tell them we were deciding who gets what."

Terrifying him, they took his proffered arms and linked theirs through his. My God, he thought, they're trying to paper over our differences. It's worse than I thought, he thought, and together, side by side with them on the wide staircase, goofy as comrades, Ray Lunt effected the first conscious entrance he'd ever made in his life.

*Stanley Elkin was the author of 17 books, including novels, novellas, and collections of short stories and essays. He won the National Book Critics Circle Award in 1982 for the epic novel George Mills and in 1995 for Mrs. Ted Bliss, his last finished novel. He was a finalist for the National Book Award three times, most recently for The MacGuffin and also a finalist for the PEN/Faulkner award for his 1994 collection of novellas, Van Gogh's Room at Arles. Elkin was a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, taught at Washington University in St. Louis, and is included in the just-released Best American Short Stories of the Century.*

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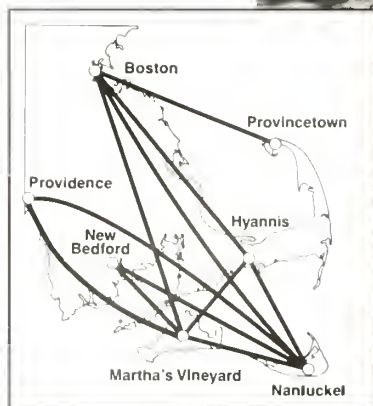
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## Driving to Ypsilanti

by Sarah Messer

1.

Because we had some time, we were renting a farm house covered in aluminum siding in a midwestern landscape of flatness, wet leaves; some of us were fixing broken trucks, building windmills, lugging 50 used batteries in a trailer behind the re-vamped Honda Civic; some were training dogs in a manner based on the theories of Trappist monks; some were mopping the floors of the People's Food Co-op with lemon juice and vinegar; some were painting birch trees in the laundry room, growing organic lettuce on the triangle of land that stretched behind the barn to the highway; we were borrowing each others Indian print skirts and not returning them, getting them caught in bicycle chains; some were canning tomatoes, leaving books out in the rain in the garden; some of us were trying to have impromptu musical events involving percussion instruments, smoking too many Drum cigarettes, asking, "Hey, you got any condoms?" 1 a.m., taping Georgia O'Keeffe posters over the holes in the plaster walls, signing up for drum lessons that we never attended; some of us were discovering fencing masks, birdcages in the barn, filming rock videos, dying our hair green, lighting more incense, dressing in drag, experimenting with deodorant stones, leg bleach, spray painting the rafters in the barn where a giant parachute hung and blew through the open hayloft; some of us were working on community farms, interested in Latin American coffee cooperatives, the teachings of Emmanuel Swedenborg, the teachings of Vilimakirte, the teachings of Rashneesh, Buddhism, Quakerism, Judaism, Alanon, AA, and Gurumai; some of us had bells in our dreadlocks, grew marijuana instead of lettuce on the triangle of land, had dreadlocks even though we were white, complained about the hard water turning our hair orange, the chemical spill seeping into the ground water, but said it didn't matter anyway because pretty soon we'd be in France, Guatemala, Nepal, San Francisco, Japan, Provincetown, and in the meantime we were building bonfires, setting up telescopes, burying each other to see what burying was like, burying two dogs killed by cars in a snow storm, burying mice, burying birds that smashed into the picture window of the kitchen facing the highway, dragging the old bathtub over the fire pit, filling it with a hose and calling it a hot tub, making lawn ornaments out of toasters and chrome fenders that offended the landlord and the neighbors; some of us were hennaing our hair, cutting it, growing it long, growing beards and shaving them, patching the wall socket with duct tape, giving backrubs, buying in bulk, trying to avoid white sugar, sleeping three to a bed, leaving candy wrappers in our cars, finding out that we were just like our fathers, our mothers, our siblings we thought we had hated, had run away from, but here, we were trying to love each other, we really were, because love was an open hand, the openness we shared with others, even if sometimes it was sex five times a day, trying to detach like it said in the tantric sex book, trying to transcend orgasm; but some of us were abandoning projects, getting fed up, slamming doors, removing doors and losing them, getting into therapy, hiring friends to haul cars away, friends who saved the vehicles in half taking all the parts; some of us were always watching the bus schedule, lying to the landlord about

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who actually lived here, running out of peanut butter, milk, saying if only I could find a lover who is, who really is, at his or her core, an authentic feminist, arguing over dishes left dirty, in search of free-food, the endless happy hour, repairing canoes, dinghies, inflatable rafts that would never float.

**2.**

Two of us, stupidly, fell in love. Who could blame us? He had come out of the bathroom one too many times in a too small towel, commenting on the shape of her hipbones under her skirt; she had left little tokens, pieces of rust, bicycle reflectors on his altar and outside his door one too many times; suddenly they were separate from us and special to each other; they were backrubbing on the living room floor, we were sitting on the couch reading as he turned off all the lights one by one, lit the candle stubs one by one, while she held her place on the carpet, he changed the station from college-rock to "sounds from the hearts of space," lit some more incense and then we got the hint and disappeared; they crawled into her room on their hands and knees; they thought they were silent, a hidden thing, they held the sheets in their teeth, but the next morning, they wore the scent of each other like crushed velvet shirts; every night after that, he snuck into her room, came in with his face painted like a skeleton from guerrilla theater and war protesting, left his grease-paint on her pillows; but it was an embarrassment, she felt, to love a housemate, and we knew about them all along; late night card games stopped; at every meal the two of them held their desire for each other in their down-cast eyes and we became only housemates to them, and we stopped telling them about pot-lucks, parties, and protests; she was critical, she said every night that it had to stop although she loved his thighs, loved the width of his back as much as she loved the grass in the field, the large expanse of sky spread over them lying hidden in the triangle of land; and he agreed that it had to stop although he loved the smell of her breath, the taste of her as much as he loved listening to the highway, as much as he loved rubber and steel and engines, as much as he loved planets, the heft and weight of them suspended in space, the feel of a globe in his hands, standing before a high school class where sometimes he substituted, remembering the way her body clamped down when he was inside her, like a closed fist.

**3.**

But she was going places in her head and not coming back; she needed to use his body to jar herself back into being; outside of Ypsilanti, a bunch of his friends were squatting on an abandoned estate, and one night after he found out about the party, he started the Honda Civic, said get in, and she was beyond complaining about his drinking at that point, his compulsiveness, stopping at a 7-11 to buy Mellow Yellow to cut the Jack Daniels, a glove compartment full of weed in a plastic Kroger's bag; the old stone manor had burned down years ago, but the game keeper's house was pretty solid, a stone cottage that had been passed down to squatters for years in winter, each new flock of tenants adding more amenities—a wood stove, new windows, plastic sheeting insulation, a kitchen counter, thrift-store plates, gas lamps, a kerosene refrigerator, a tin 10-gallon water container over a make-shift sink; it helped to have a stream nearby so the squatters could wash their clothes with Dr. Bronners, and the girl who got knocked up last year could haul water in a rubber tub to wash her baby; he had slept with that girl, the one with a tattoo of a daisy-chain around her wrist and a big smile, and the tall lanky one Crystal, they had all wound up in a threesome a few years ago, and when he arrived with his new lover (how would she be introduced?) down the dirt road where, driving she watched the sky, the limbs of trees flying over them as the car bumped along—arrived to the clutch of rusted cars, some parked by partiers, some abandoned for years—the girls came out to greet them and they all just had to embrace—hey, cool to see you again, and, so, this is my housemate, hi.

**4.**

The party had been going since noon, it was now 10:30 p.m.; and he was immediately a ball of nerves, lust, the liquor hot in his arms, the palms of his hands, numb to the cold; inside the stone farm house, he abandoned her to strangers as he went upstairs to see Crystal's room; meanwhile, stoned, paranoid, she said hello to people with hummus in their beards, ate pieces of the three-hour-old potluck with her hands, her mouth filled with cotton; everyone was trying to be friendly, hey it's a full moon, why not check out the bonfire, out behind the house by the tool shed in a cornfield, she meet a girl who ran a puppet theater, a local violin maker, a short guy getting his teaching certificate from Eastern U; has anyone seen that bowl; across the fire, his arm draped around Crystal, so tall with long dirty-brown soft hippie hair, her layers of skirts over her blue jeans and Birkinstocks with wool socks; a pile of irregularly split wood lay like limbs where some guys with pony-tails set empty beer bottles and lit off rockets, the sparks bright orange; she saw him with Crystal, remembering how he told her what it was like to fuck in that threesome—finally a woman whose length matched his, the right size to hug, he had said, an amazon; then there was his friend, Lenny beside her, passing a glass of what she thought was water, really vodka, that she choked back trying not to gag as it burned her throat; Lenny taking her hand, saying hey, hey, leading her to the barn where he claims some five of them live now, having carved their own rooms out of the space with plastic sheeting, some nails, 2 x 4s and a staple gun; yesterday he bought a space heater, the tile kind that won't catch on fire; up the aluminum ladder to the loft, Lenny was



behind her, his hands grazing her combat boots as she climbed, his hands replacing her feet on the rungs. He had taped posters of his friends' bands, Pete Moss and the Fungis, the Restroom Poets, Pussy Teeth, with masking tape that was already starting to peel and they'd only been in there 10 minutes, the plastic walls were sweating with condensed breath Lenny saying, why not try out my air mattress? covered with unzipped mummy bags, pillows with orange and brown flower prints, a pattern she thought her mother used to own; Lenny had his elbow next to her head, wrapping her braid around his finger, saying I wish I had your hair, his kinky and twisted in a Brillo cloud of a white boy's shag, tight dark curls that smelled like a musky animal, and her arms were sinking into the down-filled sleeping bag, the loud pillows as he was putting his weight, his whole length on her, his tongue in her mouth that tasted like cigarettes and garlic and she said hey man, I gotta go, I think I left the lights on in the car.

5.

It was too easy to feel this emptying out; people had been giving him beers all night, big mouths, Rolling Rocks, various liquors in plastic cups, small bottles of Peppermint Schnapps; walking back to the stone house from the bonfire, the ground sunk beneath his feet; a couple was sleeping on the couch, their legs entwined; he looked around the room which seemed underwater, candles burned out; one single light bulb dangling in the kitchen like a tiny hanged man, the light slicing upon the sleepers, an operating room; he saw: plates scraped clean, empty beer bottles, bags of blue corn chips; and he was pissed about Crystal because she wouldn't fuck him, because she was so fucking spiritual, and he had just embarrassed himself, shoving his mouth upon hers, reaching for her, causing them both to stumble drunk against a tree; her mouth moving away from his like a boat pushing off into a harbor, into the tree, the darkness; what was that about? he thought of her, his housemate, how he could never escape, living with her, sleeping with her; they had never talked about monogamy, he held on to that when he thought of excuses to go out by himself, to Kroger's or Farmer Jack's without her, to look at other women; his housemates always referred to him as "you guys"—meaning him and her; could he ever really be expected to give up other women, really give them up? with her he felt engulfed, a planet carried in a universe at the moment when they came together, a skill that they had perfected fucking all that summer in their hiding place among grasses in the triangle of land; but in the center of that: silence; to imagine himself with her forever made him feel cut off, stuck in that small and infinite loneliness that seemed to radiate from her face; and yet, he wondered about her when they were apart, wondered about her even now, and he hated her for this; he had seen her talking to Lenny and he knew Lenny was a dog; from day one he was asking about her, his housemate, hey, what's she like? up in the hay loft of the barn that one day they were spying on her while she was in the garden bent over, hiking her skirt up around her thighs, bending in the pole beans; she is probably dogging him now, he thought, stepping outside the house, the stone doorway guarded by stacks of apple crates where he placed his hand for a moment to find balance, placed his hand down expecting to find old damp wood, a ledge to lean against, but instead felt something soft like feathers; it was a sleeping chicken.

6.

She had wandered off into the graveyard of junked cars and somewhere behind her Lenny was waiting for her to come back and fuck him; when she left he had said, hey, stop by my truck and grab a condom, would you? Right hand side of the glove compartment. How long would she have to be gone before he noticed, before he got up and went looking for her? She knew that if she was in the party, around people, around the bonfire, she would be safe, but she could not bring herself to go over there because if her housemate was not there, he would certainly be with Crystal, and she couldn't face that loneliness; in the distance she heard laughter, she saw the light glowing from the cornfield and she walked away from it further down the line of parked cars, further into the woods; she stopped finally by an old Impala covered in vines, its windows broken; inside she could see the shape of the leather seats, and the space where the back seat had been ripped out; she wanted to crawl inside it and hide and wait for him to find her; she wanted to know how long it would take for him to notice; she stood for a long time by the passenger door of the car, the moon behind her left shoulder, her fingers in her mouth; then she found herself walking back; for what? she decided that he was probably with Crystal, and if she didn't see him right away she would drive the car home; then what? move out, she supposed, the next day, break the whole thing off, it was, after all, crazy—she would miss getting high, his bottomless bag of weed—but they were not committed to each other, they had never said it meant anything; she was a graduate student for christ-sake she was supposed to be smart; so why was she here with a bunch of slacker hippies drunk out of her mind and obsessing over a person who had never heard of Wordsworth—a dropout activist, a substitute who wooed her with his rebuilt engines and bath towel; she saw for the first time, how easy it had been.

7.

He saw for the first time how complicated it was, this housemate with whom he had entangled himself like a thicket; he saw her shape coming out of the forest of trees towards the house as he stood in the doorway; surprised to find relief in her image, her black dress brushing the ground, her

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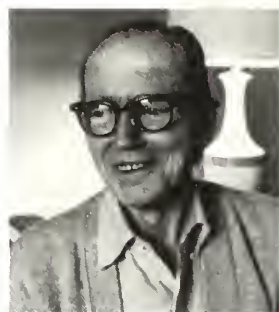
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Myron Stout, who died in 1987, was a distinguished painter who moved yearround to Provincetown in 1952. For 20 years he kept a meticulous journal in which he explored and revised his thoughts about painting and painters, both living and long dead. The Whitney Museum published excerpts from these journals in the exhibition catalogue that accompanied the artist's retrospective there in 1980, the major recognition of his career, occurring when he was disabled with blindness (described in the journals). The entire manuscript deserves comparison with the classics of writing by artists, including Delacroix's *Journals* and Van Gogh's *Letters*. The curator of the Whitney retrospective, Sanford Schwartz, wrote that Stout "takes for granted that he can say exactly what he wants to say, and this gives his prose a flowing ease. Always articulate, frequently eloquent his sentences and thoughts come to him as complete, balanced, effortlessly many-claused entities."

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arms swinging beneath a heavy wool cape; he walked out, encircling her, leading her back down the path; was that resistance he felt from her? or was she merely sluggish, looking over her shoulder; he wanted to show her the hidden corn field where all the stalks had been cut down leaving only stumps like knife handles in the ground; he held her hand and led her out into the middle of its stubbled flatness; from where they stood, the moon was a street lamp; at that moment, he wanted to take her quickly, fumbling, pressing his mouth against hers which tasted faintly sour, and she was saying something about her cape, which he threw on top of some corn stalks he had mashed down with his boot, his hand against her breast as he tried to pull her towards him thinking that this was something magic, that there was something eternal and untouchable about them after all; and maybe it was the liquor or the drugs, but somehow in this moonlight the loneliness in her face seemed suddenly sweet as she was laying down on top of him, unbuttoning the front of her dress like a long wing unfurling; as he moved inside her he thought at that moment that he had been wrong all these months, wrong all along, that there would never in his life be another woman like her, moving on top of him on the ground in the cornfield, and he knew that it took driving out here to Ypsilanti, to this farm full of freaks, to the faces of other lovers to find her again and from this moment, everything would be changed between them, and at the same moment she realized, moving on top of him, how empty it had been all along, and it took being dragged out to Ypsilanti, to this decrepit place to see how low she could sink in her own delusion and clinging to the false idea of passion which had been created solely in her mind by circumstance, by the climate of the time, this time in her life and their environment of friends and housemates who were lost in idealism, stuck in ruts, rotting in cornfields; and at that moment when they grasped each other, drunk in the dirt, it had never been clearer than it was now that he was bound to stay with her forever and she was bound to desert him, because as it turns out, love is not about openness, an open hand, love is about timing; and we all felt this one by one in similar moments when eventually that which cleaved us together cleaved us apart leaving only boxes of shoes, recycled bottles and a futon left at the roadside for junk-pickers or sanitation workers or new students to lift up, throw in their trucks and haul away.

*Sarah Messer was a fellow in poetry at the Fine Arts Work Center in 1996-97. Her poetry has been published in the Paris Review, the Kenyon Review, Quarterly West, the Michigan Quarterly Review, and others. Her short fiction has been published in Story magazine. A memoir of place, Red House, is forthcoming from Viking in spring of 2000. She is a 1999 recipient of an NEA grant in poetry and currently lives in Marshfield, MA.*

## The Rest of Us

by Grace Paley

One day, waiting for a bus, standing on a street corner in lower Manhattan, somewhere near Canal, having in fact, judged another human being and found him guilty, she thought of justice that heavy word. As a member of the general world-wide mothers' union, she had watched the man's mother, who leaned on the witness bar, her face in its late season lank leafage of whitening yellow hair turning one way, then the other in the breeze and blast of justice. Like a sunflower may be in mid autumn, having given up on the sun Faith thought, letting wind and weather turn her heavy head.

Still the man had held a real gun to the head of the old grocer and taken his half-day's profit of \$22. Immediately, Faith thought as she often did, of the great gun held to the world's head and the littler guns pointing every which way at all the little national slivers of world. (Many people hate that kind of thought sequence which goes from daily fact to global metaphor. Others just normally think that way.)

She was leaning on someone's car, looking up and around probably muttering little curses like oh shit! or fuck! that are quite common. Even people in the movies say them frame after frame without a censor even noticing.

Up above her, so close she'd nearly missed it, she saw the high six story wall of a building whose old companion had been torn down leaving a pale green New York imprint of old staircases, landings, mysterious verticals and horizontals. She sighed, not cosmically this time, but with an appreciation for the remarkable designs of time and decadence. A man passing stopped, watched her looking, sighing. Well, he said, what do you think lady? It's like the rest of us. It's going to deteriorate any minute. Right?



*Grace Paley was born in the Bronx in 1922. Her books include Enormous Changes at the Last Minute, Later the Same Day, Long Walks and Intimate Talks, Little Disturbances of Man, and Collected Stories. Her collection of nonfiction, Just As I Thought, was published in 1998. She is currently at work on a volume of poetry. The above is excerpted from a work-in-progress tentatively titled The Rest of Us.*

## Charles Hawthorne: Color Makes the Form

by April Kingsley



One hundred years ago, Charles Webster Hawthorne (1872-1930) started an art school in Provincetown that remained an effective model for the rest of the century. In 1899, when Hawthorne established his Cape Cod School of Art, he wasn't the first artist or the first Impressionist, nor even the first Impressionist-based art instructor on the tip of the Cape, but his methodology worked and lasted. He taught more than technique; he taught both literal and figurative reliance on one's own vision and the need for integrity and freedom from preconceptions to keep that vision honest and meaningful. Hawthorne's students passed the torch, and kept the flame lit in their own classes. One of them, Henry Hensche, was still teaching via demonstration in the Hawthorne way a decade ago.

It is in Hawthorne's late watercolors that his advice, recorded in *Hawthorne on Painting: From Students' Notes Collected by Mrs. Charles Hawthorne*, is most clearly manifested in his own work: "Working out of doors your eye will be brought up to color—it has the effect of shaking off the shackles of your mind, showing you that you can do anything you please, making you dare." The watercolors are daring. They are dazzling. Painted on the Lower Cape, in New England, and on trips to Texas and Mexico, France, England, Spain, and North Africa during the last five years of his life, these watercolors open up new expressive possibilities for the medium. "Let a watercolor get away from you," he told his students. "If you can't get it back, try another." They are as free and as close to a form of abstract expressionism as he ever came, except, perhaps, in the demonstration pieces he painted on site in Provincetown for his students' edification. These oils, evidently, were not considered finished paintings and so were given to the students, who drew lots, at the end of the year. A group of these oil sketches was seen sometime after Hawthorne's death by his son, Joseph Hawthorne, who found that he could tell from them what the weather was like, and even the wind direction.

A sense of this accuracy of observation despite the speed of execution can be gleaned from *Class Study, Nude* in the collection of the Provincetown Art Association and Museum (PAAM), which will mount two major Hawthorne exhibitions this summer. The golden glow of the model's skin with its greenish

patches points to a natural light source, despite being indoors. Hawthorne would tell his students to be on the lookout for those greenish tones when painting flesh in the open air, where most of his demonstrations were given. The sunlight obliterated much of the detail, forcing the students to think in terms of broad strokes.

"Paint with freedom," he would urge, "It gives you more mastery of the brush. Go out like a savage, as if paint has just been invented. Put it on with a putty knife, even fingers and you get something fresh—water is wet, sky has air, you can walk into the canvas. If you go out with brushes you do it subconsciously in the way embedded by custom." *House and Backyard, Spring and Viera House* (PAAM) and *Untitled (Autumn Foliage)*, *White Birches, New Hampshire*, *Segovia*, *Ely Cathedral*, and *Public Square, Zaragoza* are some of the watercolors that Hawthorne seems to have painted "like a savage." The cathedral at Ely is set in an English field. It must have been an incomparably beautiful day when he saw it, as it is a riot of rich, hot colors applied with painterly abandon. One can hardly imagine being that excited about a piece of architecture, even a great one like Ely Cathedral, so the light must have been spectacular. A Moorish gateway in Avila might be expected to be brilliant with yellow and gold, on the other hand. "Give me something dripping with sunlight," he told his students, "Yell at me with color." Surely Notre Dame never looked as colorful to an artist's eyes before Hawthorne laid his on it, watercolors in hand.

Hawthorne continually reiterated that simplicity is vital and the student should concentrate on seeing nature in large spots of color: "Make a house a note of color, make the trees a note, the grass a note, the shadows also, and make the sky keep away from it." You can count the color spots in *House and Backyard, Spring and Viera House* on two hands. One watercolor of Provincetown is reduced to a simple cross, the horizontal band of the land crossed by a vertical tower and its reflection down the intervening water. Each axis spans the paper. Others, even simpler, are just land and sky or water and sky, though never in unbroken expanses, since the colors change from area to area.

Posing the model out of doors in bright sunlight, so her face and other incident would be lost in shadow, was one way Hawthorne forced his students to see in terms of silhouettes. Another was to have students imagine a large sheet of glass between them and the sitter and transfer her spots of color onto it as flat shapes. "Everything in painting is a matter of silhouettes,"



CLASS STUDY NUDE





HOUSE AND BACK YARD, SPRING, 1927-30

he said, "Hold light against shadow, not light against light." Seeing things as silhouettes is drawing—the outline of your subject against the background, the outline and size of each spot of color against every other spot of color it touches, is the only kind of drawing you need bother about." *Class Study, Profile* (PAAM) demonstrates this concept of color-forming in oils, but virtually all of the watercolors do so as well and without strong dark shapes. *Sevilla* is a marvelous example with its pure yellow parallelogram/wall, red rooflines, and green window shutters.

But everyone sees differently. When Edwin Dickinson, one of the greats to come out of Hawthorne's classes, learned there that "plane relationships are more representable through comparative value than through implications of contour drawing," as he observed in his introduction to *Hawthorne on Painting*, he found the key to a lifelong style, tonalist in essence. In his wake came completely gray painters. Other Hawthorne students, such as John Frazier, painted brilliant landscapes with thick, lush oil color that were as free-wheeling as Hawthorne's late watercolors. As Dickinson put it, Hawthorne's system "freed far more people than it bound."

Hawthorne's *Gray Day in Spring, Provincetown*, with its muted colorism and delicate tonalities, is the kind of work Dickinson surely would have responded to, while Frazier would have been drawn to the boldness of *Public Square, Zaragoza, Sevilla*, or *Rooftops*. (How differently fellow Provincetownian Edward Hopper would have painted those same rooftops.) Here Hawthorne has drawn in close to his subject, as he urged his students to do. A work like *Figures on a Pier* is rare in its distance from the subject matter. It is more like *St. Jean De Luz #3*, and others done in foreign lands. When he is at home in Provincetown, where everything feels close together, he paints even the clouds and distant dunes as if they were nearby. In *Seascape*, for instance, he arcs the sky down into the water along a broken blue path to anchor it in the lower right foreground near us.

"Outdoors the light takes the modeling out of things," Hawthorne acknowledged. His major figure paintings are set indoors, and that is why his watercolors look so different. Even at

his most Impressionist, in a painting ablaze with light like *Girl with a Yellow Scarf* or *Girl Sewing #1* (PAAM), where light prevails above the dark floor as if it were a sunshiny summer's day, the figures appear firmly modeled. Having studied at the Art Students League with traditionalists Frank Vincent du Mond and George de Forest Brush, then with the American Impressionist William Merritt Chase, before studying Dutch, Spanish, and Italian masters on his own in Europe, Hawthorne combined solid grounding in

technique with a spirited approach to surface. A prepared gesso base and layers of transparent underpainting preceded the supple, "fat" pigments he used so abundantly on the surface. They are applied in the kind of color spots he taught others to see. A red patch appears above an area of creamy yellow-white and you have a cheek. Reddish-pink surrounds mottled yellow, beige, and white and it's an ear. A brownish smudge along the top of passages of dazzling white makes a shoulder seem to round off in space, while a dash of blue on the other side of the neck puts it in shadow. Nowhere does a drawn line edge or shape the planes of color, yet forms are solidly drawn; neither highlights or shadows are rendered, yet the figures have an undeniably physical presence. When a passage of modeling occurs, as seems to happen in the cheek of *Woman in Red*, you will note patches of green on her neck, red on her nose, and yellow near her brow. A boat in the harbor to her right is a blaze of yellow, her dress an accumulation of red strokes, all set against a bright blue day.

"Put the spot there because it's the right color and not because it draws a nose," he taught. "We have to learn to negotiate the end of a nose. Work until you can paint an ear so it doesn't look like an oyster. Not wrinkles drawn, but the color spots that wrinkles make." You can see clearly in his portrait *Old Sea Captain* that he practiced what he preached. Encouraging his students to "enter the dishpan and palette knife brigade," he suggested: "Take a dishpan, some bricks and tell the beauty of them. It would take some study out of the commonplace and make it a work of art. Do still life and see the beauty you can get in it. There is something elevating in the painting of a side of beef so it can hang beside the Madonnas in the Louvre and hold its own through the centuries."

Taking pleasure in humble subjects was, of course, a hallmark of Ashcan Realism, a movement contemporaneous with Hawthorne's maturity as a New York painter (in the winters he lived in Greenwich Village). Hawthorne's Portuguese fishermen would have been at home with Robert Henri's Irishmen and George Luks' street urchins. While the Ashcan painters were influenced by the Dark Impressionism of the late

19th-century Munich School and William Merritt Chase, Hawthorne, who studied with Chase, seems to have been more affected by the work he saw by Hals and Rembrandt in Holland (note the previous reference to Rembrandt's painting of a side of beef) and the Spaniards Velasquez and Murillo. His painting *The Junk Dealer* has the full flavor of Rembrandt, the marvelous *His First Voyage* (PAAM) reminds us of Hals, and *Men Cleaning Fish* has Ashcan robustness. Hawthorne's masterwork, *The Crew of the Philomena Manta*, combines all three: Halsian portraiture, Ashcan working class action, and something of the commanding humanity of Rembrandt's *Nightwatch*.

The dark shadowy Rembrandtian backgrounds out of which so many of Hawthorne's figures emerge are the key to his approach to the model indoors. He told his students: "You must establish a background, in the right relation to the head. Until you have the spot of the face true against the background, you have nothing to build on. Watch the big spots of color make them more subtle in relation to it. Remember the background becomes a background only in relation to the thing you are doing in the light." The still life parts of portraits of the Provincetown fishermen and their families have an earthy beauty that probably harks back to his study of Velasquez. He told his students to try to find old thick crockery to paint, like the cup and saucer in *His First Voyage*, because he wanted them to learn to see beauty in the commonplace and because getting its color right was a rewarding challenge.

Fish are featured more than any other motifs in Hawthorne's pictures, indicating something of a sacramental purpose behind the choice. The fish is a symbol for Christ, the fisher of men, who multiplied the loaves and the fishes to feed His people. Hawthorne's symbolism, here and in the Madonna pictures, plays into the staged quality of most of his figure paintings. (He posed friends and students as fisherfolk.) Essentially he was a post-Impressionist formalist who believed that "painting is seeing, not doing," chasing the truth of what he saw before him and unconcerned with anything else. "Have a humble attitude," he advised, "To see things simply is the hardest thing in the world. You can't begin too early, for this is not a thing of a month or a day. The value of a canvas depends almost entirely on your mental attitude, not on your moral attitude; it depends on what kind of man you are, the way you observe. Study continuously, developing yourself into a better person, more sensitive to things in nature. Spend years in getting ready." One might say he did, and the late watercolors demonstrate the value of his practicing what he preached.

*April Kingsley is the author of The Turning Point: The Abstract Expressionists and the Transformation of American Art and the new curator of art at the Kresge Art Museum in Michigan.*



# Part of a Running Conversation with **Sideo Fromboluti**

by Christopher Busa

*Sideo Fromboluti appeared on the cover of Provincetown Arts in 1991, along with his distinguished colleagues from Long Point Gallery, featured that year. Now the gallery is a memory; yet its veterans live on.*

*Fromboluti so casually absorbed the lessons of the Abstract Expressionists that it is not at once apparent what his paintings have added to the tradition of impressionistic landscape painting. Fromboluti's career retrospective—work since 1958—opened at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum in 1998, traveled this year to the Galerie Darthea Speyer in Paris, and will conclude in Pittsburgh next year at the Forum Gallery, Carnegie Museum of Art. The exhibition is accompanied by a sumptuous color catalogue of close to 50 major paintings, a chronology by April Kingsley, and an incisive introduction by Michael Brenson, who writes, "Every detail in Fromboluti's landscapes is treated with such warmth and attention that all the elements seem part of a tight-knit, self-contained family. The landscapes clearly depend upon labor; indeed they are almost hymns to physical work." Fromboluti's father was a stone mason with a third grade education and the son's paint is laid on thickly as mortar. That is because Fromboluti believes nature is as solid as a stone wall.*

**SIDEO FROMBOLUTI:** Time changes your way of seeing. If you are painting a tree today, one brushstroke can make up for all the detail Hawthorne put in. The challenge of the visual is not as dense as it once was. To reveal technical skills is no longer an achievement. Everybody tells me I draw like Raphael. If I really drew like Raphael, nobody would be interested.

**CHRISTOPHER BUSA:** What is the challenge for a painter now? It is not technical, you said, but something else.

**SF:** When I paint a night painting, I can think of Munch, I can think of Ryder. But the reason I paint night paintings is that I've walked the walk from the road to my house when it was dark. The mystery there reveals things I wasn't aware of. For example: black is never black. When I look at my night paintings, I see I avoided pure black. I feel black as the color of the sensation I felt, but what I saw was something private and slow. Emotions, intangibles, become part of the painting.

**CB:** I read an article about how people, identifying the space they are in, don't see objects—they recognize the shape of the space they are in. If shape is our basic sense of human orientation, then to give the feel of space may be the essential task of the artist. And this makes me think that the sense of sight does not depend on sight, but on motion, on another of our physical senses. You've emphasized dampness, the mildew of warm darkness, and the blackness of the

noonday sun. In *Black Sun*, you can take black and make it stand for the brightness of the sun. You do the same with your moon paintings, where we mistake, as Yeats said, "the brightness of the moon for the prosaic light of day."

**SF:** In the case of that drawing, I have a story. I went to the beach, very early in the morning, and everything was white. Nobody was around, but the white sun was blazing the white sand, and the silver-white ocean. Everything was white as my drawing paper. I said, "My God, what am I going to do—wait until it gets dark?" Then I got the feeling that I should reverse it. With all that white, the big drama was to make the black explode and be equal to the white. That's where thinking comes in. An artist doesn't just live by sensations; he has to have ideas. If you can reverse space in forms and color, you are making a brand new world. That brand new world is the excitement of stepping into the painting, as from dry land onto a boat, as Myron Stout said.

**CB:** Remarkably, a Long Point Gallery project, an exhibition attempting to depict the actual clutter of each artist's studio wall, revealed that four of a dozen artists in the cooperative had the same image on their own working walls. This was Piero della Francesca's *Flagellation of Christ*. In the background, Christ is being flayed. Up close, we see three scholars, discussing the meaning of the action in the background. So here is another reversal. The primary event is backgrounded; the secondary discussion is foregrounded.

**SF:** Long before he did his square paintings, Mondrian did representational paintings. Take his *Windmill by the Moonlight*. Well, that moon is so far out in front of the windmill, the space completely reversed itself. That reversal created the surprise of the spatial world. Hofmann called it "push and pull." I never studied with Hofmann, because I had a child and couldn't afford to go. But I always thought his ideas were marvelous.

**CB:** Hofmann, I'm told, used an image of a balloon filled with water. If you push your finger into the balloon, it displaces the water elsewhere. This push here causes that bulge there.

**SF:** Abstract Expressionism wasn't my revolution. When I came on, I learned from it and went my own way. In the early '60s, I painted *Sailboat on Menemsha Pond*, while I was on Martha's Vineyard, one of my first paintings of a sailboat in the fog. I was eager to put the sailboat in, despite the Abstract Expressionist taboo on subject matter. I showed some of them the painting, and they were upset: "Take the boat out! It is a beautiful work without it!" The boat I painted was a felt triangular form, but it was not acceptable to them.





**CB:** Couldn't they recognize that it was just a form? There's no boat there.

**SF:** No! They saw the boat, not the form. For years I had to battle this resistance. I took everything from their non-objective work and destroyed the non-objectivity. I didn't want to leave the image out.

**CB:** De Kooning never abandoned the figure. Motherwell never lost a figurative base. His colors were always rooted in nature. Red was blood red, and blue was the color of a fresh bruise.

**SF:** I had a conversation with Motherwell after he had finished hanging a show at Long Point—Irish studies he'd made about James Joyce. We were walking around, looking. In the green of the paint I could feel a tremble in the roots, the way they were threaded in peat moss. I said something exclamatory — "My God, how green is your green!" And Motherwell said, "Well, don't you think I'm a realist?"

**CB:** He said that?

**SF:** I've never forgotten it. Gottlieb went sailing every day and refused to see the seascapes in his work. He became furious when I told him I saw the sun over the water in his painting. Rothko wouldn't admit it, either. He talked only about spiritualism. But I see Rothkos out my studio all the time, in the evening, say, when the bar across the window separates two tonalities in the sky. I always loved nature.

**CB:** Maybe artists, on some level, are obliged to be liars. I enjoyed reading your journals where you talk about the artist as a thinking animal, recording experience as he lives, yet being guided conceptually in his painting decisions. You don't equate conceptual thinking with language. You equate it with visual representation because you believe forms can express thoughts.

**SF:** Human nature is to be aware of changes. When I paint in the city, I love to paint people. The paintings are much murkier, more closed in, set indoors as part of city life. I like that. But when I go to the country, I open up. Everybody knows that when you get in the car and leave the city to go to the ocean, you suddenly breathe. I could never paint a landscape in the city.

**CB:** Corot went around the French and Italian countryside and came back to his studio in Paris to paint what he had sketched, painting country pictures in a city studio. Resika, your colleague, does that.

**SF:** I have no quarrel with the way any good landscape painter works. The question of painting landscape inside was a major issue with the Barbizon painters. Millet could never have painted *The Gleaners* at sunset outdoors; Debigny, who painted from an open house boat, painted while looking at the scene. It's only individual temperament. Ryder painted his great ocean scenes in a tiny, stuffy room in Manhattan. Cezanne had to work with Mount Sainte-Victoire before his eyes. It is obvious these artists



ANCHORED SAILBOAT, 1982

carry the nature they love with them wherever they go.

**CB:** You've resolved the problem by creating a new sense of space in an urban setting. Usually, for you, the city painting becomes a moment shared with several people, crowded together around a nightclub table, their features clouded not with clouds, but cigar smoke.

**SF:** Some painters get tired of painting so they do etchings for awhile, or work in black and white, or do sculpture. My change, really, is between summer and winter. I feel like I'm doing two entirely different things. I'm reawakened when I go to the country and I'm reawakened when I get back to the city. That rhythm is satisfying.

**CB:** And it wouldn't be satisfying if you just did one, exclusively?

**SF:** No. I've done a thousand drawings, but I've never done a print. I have no interest. Everybody's tried to get me to do prints; I will not do prints. Why? I like to feel the artist's hand on the work and not the weight of the press.

**CB:** Indoors you can make a tiny light source like a candle feel enormous. Which summer days in Wellfleet will you go outdoors to sketch?

**SF:** My passion is painting and I only sketch if I get tired of painting. Then I might do 20 or 30 drawings at one time. I separate them completely. I do that in the city, too. If I've done a lot of painting and I'm tired, I'll just hire a model and draw for a few hours a day. My sketches are scribbles of future painting, very rudimentary. Because I paint in this loose abstract way, all I need is the spirit of the thing.

**CB:** I was looking at some clouds the other day, noticing how they had been shaped by wind. The wind had run through the white vapor and disappeared, leaving its shape behind. I thought, isn't that what a brushstroke is—the evidence of energy that remains in the form. I saw this quality in some of your drawings of wind on a pond. You indicate the wind with sweeping streaks of ink, and the feel of wind is present. Other works deal with specific moments, like

rain in the afternoon or mist at morning or evening.

SF: I've done dozens of paintings of rain. The first time I did a rain painting was during a very rainy summer on the Cape. It was time to include that feeling. I painted with slanted lines, like a Japanese print. But, trying to express an idea, I turned the idea into an illustration.

CB: You felt it was impossible to escape making an illustration?

SF: I realized that few painters have ever painted rain. I was painting a new painting when, accidentally, paint began dripping down. I thought: this is rain! Dripping, fresh, fluid, wet. So I began a series, with variations, on the idea of loose-brushed painting. Of course the greatest painting that has ever been painted is the one by Van Gogh, done in his last years in a mental institution. He had a bare window and the rain was pouring in a swirl. That window—incredible slashes of gray! mysterious color!—is the closest thing to rain, dampness, wetness, I ever saw. The point is that you can't make the art with anything but the senses you find coming out of yourself.

CB: One of the things I've learned from you is your clear emphasis on the artist's experiential self, the one who makes the paintings.

SF: I wrote in my journal that every summer I set my easel before a magnificent confusion. I understand none of the confusion, yet I must paint. Is it true I can see what I think? Can I paint the damn things in the air, the breeze blowing down my back, the sun hot on my arms; can I paint the fog, the odor of the bog, the stench of brackish water rising from sweet smelling water lilies along the edge, and the roar of thunder; can I paint the light formed by molecules reflecting the sun with Windsor-Newton paint? Yet there is my idea of nature. Do I speak about it? Or do I speak about me? I never know, but the components satisfy all of my senses.

CB: You emphasize that you are a visual artist with five senses. You own more than a pair of eyeballs. That's important. And, Sideo, you're not a bad writer—did anybody ever tell you that?

SF: I never wrote before. When I started my journal, I felt I had to do it.

CB: I love one painting of yours, a gray-blue black shining on a moonlit Wellfleet pond. The moon illuminates the night, permitting us to see darkness, which is an oxymoron—how do you see darkness?

SF: In the painting—*Moonlight on Patience Brook*—I could have done it without the trees if I wanted to. But I didn't want to do less. I wanted to add something more to the painting. The trees became the big event.

CB: Your charcoal versions of a windy gray day remind me why charcoal's great: you can make

a sharp line, a coarse line, you can smudge it, darken it, gray it.

SF: I used to do a lot of watercolors in the earlier days, and I did a lot of pen and ink and wash. I was never quite satisfied and felt I didn't have control of what I wanted. Pencil was too slow. I decided there is such a thing as individual timing. Each one of us has our own timing. After a lifetime of marriage I've learned that my wife Nora spends two hours in the bathroom, and I spend 10 minutes. So when I came to this pressed charcoal, it dragged just enough to satisfy me, and it didn't run away from me, down the drain, like ink and wash.

CB: Tell us a little more about pressed charcoal. How is it made?

SF: It's German-made round charcoal, pressed coal of some kind. It's very black.

CB: Is it a black that is light and fluffy or dense and heavy?

SF: It's dense and heavy. Unlike regular charcoal, it can be smeared. I discovered it when I was ready, even though I'd known of it for years. My temperament is to paint very heavily and some artists can't stand to paint heavily.

CB: When you did those rain paintings with the straight drips, did you thin the paint with turpentine?

SF: Yeah, sure. I controlled the paint. That's what's called knowledge—how to handle your materials.

CB: In your triptych you call *Rising Fog on Higgins Pond* you have three separate panels, very close to each other. There is no naturalistic space. Things move in and out. The trees march to the right, enter the new panel, and become another grouping of self-similarity, in a rhythm not unlike Pollock's *Blue Poles*. It's a method with more psychology than imagination.

SF: It's what you feed yourself with when you grow up. I grew up in South Philadelphia where I didn't see a tree, except one in the schoolyard. I didn't see a natural landscape until I was 18. Our family never went to the beach and I never went picnicking. So when I came into contact with nature, I went out of my mind. This was what I'd dreamed of all my life. At the same time, I married Nora. If I analyze, I see an impulse arose also from the mysterious symbols of Nora's Jewish background. The impulse became a reality, but also part of my dream. Every time I enter a landscape I get a religious feeling.

CB: Knowing the emphasis you place on nature, I'm cheered to know you saw your first landscape when you were 18, old enough to appreciate what you were experiencing.

SF: I went up to Woodstock and got a cabin on top of the mountain and painted the goddamned mountain and sky.

CB: Earlier you mentioned Guston. Did you get to know him in Woodstock?

SF: Yes. We went to a dinner party that he drove us to, stayed until four o'clock in the morning. He was painting pink and green abstracts, very beautiful, pure squares, only abstract dabbles of pink, and green, and blue. That night—it must have been 1958—Guston said the day before had been horrible. Clement Greenberg had come up to Woodstock and called him up and asked to see what he was doing. When he saw, Greenberg said, "They make good background." He couldn't understand Guston at all! Guston was hurt and upset. That's how a goddamn critic can destroy an artist's confidence.

CB: If the artist will let him.

SF: If the artist will let him.

CB: Part of being a strong artist is to stay vulnerable. People close off their vulnerability to be strong, but then what have they to be strong about? When you first moved to New York in '48 you became friendly with Jack Tworikov, whose daughters, Hermine and Helen, were babysitting your kids. At that time Tworikov was doing his slant paintings, and they make me think of your early rain drawings.

SF: I never thought about that before. Could very well be. I think mine came out of a discovery in the paint itself.

CB: Also, there is a sense of a prevailing directional force, repeated. Not just once, but streaming. When Tworikov began to use the grid, he intersected it with dynamic, directional energy. My treasured quotation of his is when he said: "The grid is like the sea. You can fish in it." But your association with dampness was different when you were a kid. Did you grow up in a basement where the walls were weeping with mildew?

SF: No. Mildew and dampness is New England. I've done sunlight the same way as dampness—all kinds of elements and sensations, side by side, as one on one.

CB: We know the world is composed of earth, air, fire, and water.

SF: And painters.

CB: In *Anchored Sailboat*, a charcoal from 1982, the reflection of the mast in the water anchors the sailboat. The space is reversed. The background becomes the foreground.

SF: Oh, yes. Nothing upsets me more than skies with holes in them. Nothing. As soon as I see a painting that's got a blue sky with a hole in it, I know the painter doesn't know what he's doing. He's separating the visual from the solidity of nature. I have a fear of lightning. It is snake-like, turbulent, and directional like veins in the body. But that's the opposite of serene and symmetrical.

Christopher Busa reviewed the work of Duane Slick elsewhere in this issue.



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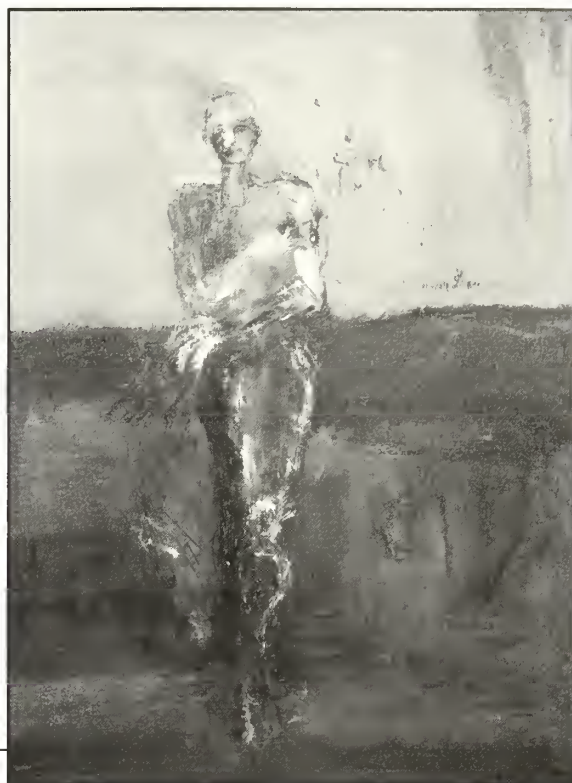
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# C-Scape Wanderings

selection by Traven Pelletier

*The C-Scape Mapping Project began in the winter of 1997, when I was awarded a three-month artist's retreat at the C-Scape Duneshack. In collaboration with Mark Adams of the Cape Cod National Seashore, I began using GPS (Global Positioning Satellite System), a computerized mapping and navigation tool, to create virtual landscape art and records of "intuitive wanderings." This past winter, about two dozen artists and writers shared in the Project, each living in the shack for a few days and finding their own ways to "map" anything from the literal land to amorphous emotional responses. Images and journal entries below provide a small glimpse of the results.*

—TRAVEN PELLETIER



It is snowing in the kitchen today. I notice that each gust of wind is followed (after a half-second delay) by a serious shaking of the caves. This is the idea: develop a way of registering wind currents through the shack; map the drafts with swinging mobiles.

—IRÉN HANDSCHUH



I lit all the kerosene lamps, and then I looked at all the reflections in the windows, and then I sat in all the chairs. I observe myself in the space. I map the interior. These ink drawings happened at night as a response to this animate space. —JENNIFER BRADLEY



I wanted to make a "root ball," however there are very few roots to be found here. Instead I started collecting the sea straw that washes up—there's plenty of that. I will lash it into spheres with string. The straw maps the tide, the little mats of sea-born detritus making outlines of the incoming waves. —TRAVEN PELLETIER

There's a balance I'm keeping as I traverse the dunes, a balance between safety and vulnerability, between knowing where I am and a complete loss of direction. As the coast disappears over the ridge and I'm left without a clear marker of direction, I notice things: the little valley of dead trees; the small forest of live ones; the hill of two-toned grasses.

Paradoxically, only when my instinct towards a secure orientation is lifted does my sense of place become more complete. —JACOB BRICCA

Why has this experience come to represent what it has? Magic, healing, peace. What is this place stripped of its meaning, devoid of the weight of associations? I love landscape. The experience of painting it or walking into it turn ones best thinking on its head.

—MICHAEL CARROLL



I feel at home in an archetypal way. I've always had the fear, you know, THE FEAR, but that is nothing special. I feel it in my own home, with my kids, out in the world, like when you go to the bathroom at a club or a party (or your own mother's house at Christmas) and you lock the door and for that moment everything else is outside. That is what I like about bondage. I can achieve peace in many ways but locking has always been a certainty for a girl born and raised with few boundaries. —KATHE IZZO

*An exhibition of work by members of the C-Scape Mapping Project will be held at the Schoolhouse Center in Provincetown from October 1 to 14. The Project is funded in part by the LEF Foundation, the Arts Foundation of Cape Cod, and the Massachusetts Cultural Council.*





SACHA RICHTER, *NEW HORIZON*, 1998

## Utopia at the Schoolhouse

by Robert Strong

Once upon a time in Provincetown, artists united for a single purpose and endeavored to express a collective vision of utopia. But how does one represent that eternally ungraspable "place that is no place," a society so perfect in the imagination as to be impossible in reality? Of course, this effort could not sustain itself. *Utopia*, an invitational exhibition at the Schoolhouse Center, was open through autumn of '98. And then it was gone.

The idea for the show was born to curator Michael Carroll during a conversation with artist Ladd Spiegel, who remarked that during his 1950s childhood he was constantly told: "By the time you grow up we will live in a utopia." The promises Spiegel heard produced only a steady series of disappointments. Carroll decided to put the question of utopia to Spiegel and 30 other artists with roots in Provincetown, a place where utopian ideals have particular resonance. For the catalog, Jennifer Hagar wrote a "meditation" on utopia, in which she quotes a friend: "Provincetown is a place where over and over people describe a quality of being accepted and the freedom to be yourself. Though there is strife and struggle to living here, certainly, I have come upon glimmers of momentary utopia, suddenly, where I feel immersed in the elements."

Carroll believes "that art is the perfect language for utopia because, though utopia might exist, it continually resists itself." Curator, artist, and viewer begin the show together, united by a common word. Then, a powerful diversity of ideas and wills refracts through this word to arrive at divergent ends. The works in the show take us on a tour that perfectly describes utopia. We end in consensual discord.

The first work one sees upon entering the gallery is Sal Randolph's *Utopia—Free Shop*, a wall

of shelves housing a "shop" of free stuff that is constantly replenished as it "sells." Rocks, birdnests, French stationery—hundreds of items tagged and yours for the taking. Some of the objects alert us simply with their quotidian character. Others are more laden with apparent history, their presence questioning the personal values assigned to trifling objects. Randolph offers, "We collect objects in the attempt to make little utopias of our personal lives. What is the fate of those objects of meaning when our lives change in substantial and often unexpected ways?" Utopias always have their hidden costs—the price of Randolph's free stuff is only that it makes us think about what we hold dear.

In Provincetown utopian schemings are not always economic. Many people come here in search of sexual liberation. Lee Musselman's *Out of Closet Utopia* speaks to this urge. This rotund figurative sculpture of soft fabrics bristles with doll heads and choice body parts. A viewer's first instinct might be to see the various faces emerging from the figure as internal demons. But Musselman seeks a place where we reconcile with, rather than confront ourselves. "This was the most difficult piece I ever made," he divulges. "Everybody has homophobia. All the faces represent us and maybe one will relate to you and pull you in and give you comfort."

Works like Sacha Richter's abstracted landscape, *New Horizon*, approached the theme more subtly, even integrally. Carroll explains, "I invited Sacha to be in the show because his very use of paint is utopian. You look at the painting and you're engaged in the act of him making it." This straightforward oil painting, nearly alone amongst a preponderance of assemblages, testifies to a grounded form of utopianism, a way of making the world as you wish with exactly what you have—the land, the sky, canvas, and paint.

Amy Kandall, in her painting, *Lift Off*, seeks farther horizons. A nude female figure is poised on the nose of a space rocket. Directly above her a looming, dress-shaped structure seems ready to ensconce both her and the rocket. With the background a beautiful, waiting space-field, we find a pregnant moment of total limitlessness, a scene liable to swoon the viewer with joy or sadness in its (unrealized?) potential.

Traven Pelletier's *Eden 12* reminds us that "utopian" can be synonymous with "delusional" or "doomed." This hanging sculpture is composed of living spider plants surrounded by a sphere-shaped plexiglass terrarium filled with bubbling water. Air pumps hang on a separate platform, connected only by their hoses. Suspended around the whole is a twisted dead branch. "This is a little hanging world in itself," Pelletier says, "with a technological system that's purportedly keeping it alive. The reality is that we continue to use technology in ways that are destroying the planet." Like Spiegel's childhood false promise, *Eden 12* looks fantastic—a Jetsonian paradise—but closer inspection reveals its lies. Still, Pelletier has hope. "I think utopia actually exists *here*, we just don't see it. Utopia harkens back to a more natural time."

In this natural, universal mindset may lie the true utopian vision of Provincetown. It lands us near the pirate enclaves and intentional communities described by the philosopher Hakim Bey in his manifesto, *Temporary Autonomous Zone*. Bey describes whole societies, living consciously outside the law, never intending to last forever, but only as long as it proves fulfilling. If you don't think that Provincetown is outside the law, consider the way artists and homosexuals are treated by mainstream America and its government. A law does not have to be on the books to be in effect. Provincetown is one of very few places where individuals can escape unwritten laws; it is a pirate enclave for any individual at any moment necessary.

There is only one way in and one way out of here. Arrival can only be intentional; there is no way to simply "drive-thru." Once in Provincetown, individuals recharge their internal utopia before carrying it back out to the mainstream, like pilgrims gathering something for society—something society cannot sustain, but requires. Utopia, ultimately, does not exist for oneself, but for the good of all. Think, if it justifies your own surrender, that the utopia that was Provincetown is gone forever, that money and politics have run us under. But as long as artists work, and the dunes stand, and there are people exploring the possibility, however fleeting utopia is—it exists.

*Robert Strong received an MFA from the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at the Naropa Institute. His poetry has appeared in The Cafe Review and Black Dirt. He is a resident at the Edward Albee Foundation in Montauk this summer.*



DETAIL FROM ANN HAMILTON'S "WHITECLOTH," 1999 PHOTO LIZ DESCHENES

## Ann Hamilton's "whitecloth"

by Marc J. Straus

Ann Hamilton received the 1998 Larry Aldrich Foundation Award, which recognizes an artist whose work in the prior three years has been a model of invention, risk-taking, and excellence. The selection process begins with a trustee committee that I chair. Along with a cash award, the artist was offered a one-person exhibit at the Aldrich Museum. Shortly after the prize was announced she was also selected to represent the United States at the 1999 Venice Biennale.

In planning "whitecloth," at the Aldrich from January through May, Ann chose to limit her show to the museum's old building—a 1783 structure that had served as a home, general store, and church before Larry Aldrich purchased it in 1964 and opened the first American museum devoted exclusively to contemporary art. The two-story exhibition space retains the original rooms, oak floors, and low ceilings.

Ann wanted to develop an installation relating to the building and its history. She asked to open up the original 13 windows, which had been dry-walled over. Then she asked to paint the ceiling white (it had been black), and to cut out an eight-foot diameter circle of floor boards to replace it with a newly constructed, rotating circle. Another piece required a noisy vibrator device that encroached on the ceiling of the conference room. Then there was the request to build a motorized pulley system that would

circuit up and down between the floors, requiring yet more holes.

There was no hesitation in allowing Ann free range. Not only because she as much as anyone has marked the last decade in installation art, but because the museum has grown to embrace risks and demands. Ann's conception was probably never fully formed until the moment the exhibit opened. Elements were built and changed and woven in as though the museum space were the work itself, every wall and floorboard and ceiling pipe.

I walked through twice before the opening, once when Ann was hand-inking a glass pane bright red, her son playing nearby. The second time she was conversing with engineers; the rotating floor was sticking. Though I saw bits and pieces, when I came to the opening I was as surprised as the hundreds who attended. Perhaps I was even more astonished because I came into the exhibit with the baggage of being intimately involved with the museum's machinery and having watched the installation in process. And if that didn't blight my objectivity, I have known Ann's art well for 15 years. Now I looked whole cloth at "whitecloth."

It is a sparse show that immediately relates to its title. A white cloth (perhaps more than one?), the size of a table napkin, is yanked on a moving cord that runs along the ceiling from room to room, then suddenly pulls through a hole in the wall to disappear. The first room has a large solitary black table with a billowing white

cloth floating just inches above. The artifice is clear. Somehow air—we hear the hissing jets—must be pumped in from under the table to lift the cloth. There must be little holes all across the table. I know I will find them if I get close enough, but the work is so elegiac and sensuous I suddenly have no need to look more closely. Indeed I want to step back and take it in as one breath, as two lungs breathing out, a process of continual slow exhalation.

The windows have been stripped of their dry wall and scarifications remain. In the next room, imbedded in a wall, is a small video screen on which something gooey and dripping pulsates like a heartbeat. (It is a hand moving in a pocket covered with honey or syrup, someone volunteers.) And finally, in the last room, the large disk rotates in the floor. A number of people step on precariously. As more people step on the rotation slows, then speeds up again as they step off. A rotating floor, sensitive to weight, anxiety provoking, almost dangerous. I think of a work by Hamilton that I own. Filled water glasses sit on small platforms protruding several inches from the wall. The water spins and the room is surrounded with hum and delicate vortex. If there is increased noise in the room, like loud conversation, the water rotation slows and will stop. Is this not about the competition of inner and outer thought, how space reverberates and interacts with language, the sanctity of words? This rotating floor is more frontal, less visceral.



Is it about the interstice of desire and risk and their realization in action?

Upstairs I encounter an old desk isolated in a room. Under a white cloth is another small video screen on which we see a hand writing cursive letters on glass with a pen that squeaks as it moves. The writing is careful. I have a desire to make out the words but cannot. I imagine that whatever it says is specific, some poem or letter perhaps, and because the desk is so old, that the document is from "that time." In writing over and over again Ann exorcises the words and the ghost of the author. Memory, language, and ideas are shaped and recapitulated through oral and written traditions. These reside in the fabric of our buildings and walls as well as in our books.

In the next room I hesitate. A large white wall to the right is wet. Small drops are slowly descending its entire surface. My curiosity to understand the mechanics is quickly subsumed by poignancy. The wall is shedding tears; the house is crying for memories, painful and privileged. Such tears and memories reside in the walls of every home. An old wicker chair facing a window is piled high with old coats. This and the weeping wall are not entirely new for Ann.

In the last room is another table, this time an old lectern with a white cloth draped over an old ledger book under glass. The open pages are filled with neatly written red script. The letters run together too tightly to be read, or (again) I haven't the necessary patience. Yet I know the memory from "then" has been secured, as has the declaration of independence. I have the feeling that in the anonymous-looking script it doesn't matter whether the actual document is historically important or whether its author is an important historical figure. What matters is language. It bears itself forward. It floats into the future on a flimsy white cloth. It courses through our neurons, so many memory traces, so many cognitive molecules. It is there in every pore. We breathe it in. We breathe it out. The white cloth traces it. The trajectory is through time and us.

"whitecloth" is far larger than the sum of its parts. That is why so much of Ann Hamilton's work remains experiential and why so little is available for collection. This remarkable installation fleshed out ideas about locating ourselves within our consciousness and our history. The flesh and bones of creation may be most momentous but they are small and transitory in the scheme of things. We beings are shimmering objects whose residue is the echo of a word against the wall of a house 200 years later.

Marc J. Strans, MD, is a collector of contemporary art and president of the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art in Connecticut. His books of poetry include *One Word* (Northwestern University Press, 1994) and *Not God*, forthcoming this year, also from Northwestern.



JIM PETERS, *SHE TURNED*, 1998

## Jim Peters: An Episodic Intimacy

by Christopher Tilghman

Jim Peters has been painting female nudes with his own desperate and exuberant intensity for almost his entire career, and for all that work, for all the times he has succeeded so brilliantly at depicting the loveliness or brutality of naked flesh, the passion of love anticipated or recently enjoyed, for all of the stolen kisses and savaged dreams, he still don't know nothing. She loves me; she loves me not: which is it? It is that manic focus on the unknowable other that gives Peters' work its power. He reminds us that being loved is fine, but loving, even in the face of poor odds, is what keeps us alive.

Take a recent painting, *She Turned*, for example. The body on the bed is richly rendered, the round buttocks placed in the center of the painting, an enticing offering. The shape of these buttocks is accentuated with a series of rather playful, even cartoonish motion lines, and just to keep things in perspective, Peters has scrawled the word "ASS" on the canvas alongside. It's a bawdy, nicely nasty scene: through the window we can see the hot midday bake of the beach. All in all, a fine moment for lovemaking.

And it probably was, or will be, except...except it isn't that simple. For one thing, that face, hidden largely by a hand, is barely drawn in. The expression could well say come hither, but it could—if one lacked confidence—seem also a tiny bit smug. Maybe even a little bored. In fact, Peters has added a small bit of text into the lower left, "She turned to me and asked, 'Will Dick leave Nicole?'" Uh, Honey? Weren't we making love? And you're thinking about whether Dick and Nicole, that doomed couple from *Tender is the Night*, will stay together until Chapter Five?

In another recent work, *Russian with Checkboard Pants*, the figure is clothed and seated, and it is the face that sets off the shooting match. What a face: a dear and vulnerable set of the lips, heartbreakingly mournful eyes. The portrait takes us close, so close, but we know the truth. One could live a life with a person like that, and never once be sure of his or her love. We could be driven mad and furthermore, be grateful for it. The same can be said for the painting itself. One could spend many years with almost any of Peters' works, and never lose the vague excitement that soon, tomorrow, or next week, the true meaning will at last become clear.

Thus the other, the companion, the lover, the mother of one's children, the wife, remains unknowable. Many of the scenes Peters paints are full of narrative, but they're not stories, they're episodes, enigmatic moments of intimacy stolen out of lives about which none of us can know anything. There is mystery, confusion, tension all through Peters' paintings, amplified by a relentlessness in their composition, with their cut outs, strange bits of wood construction, globs of paint and putty. Looking for the truth matters: that's what each one of his works insist. Peters is, in fact, notorious for his use of a Skil saw—not exactly standard issue in most painters' studios—as a way to salvage a single bit of truth in one of his own works in progress, and to hell with all the other stuff he spent so long developing.

Some day, Peters may figure it all out and then spend the rest of his career painting tulips and roses, but I doubt it.

Christopher Tilghman's most recent book is the story collection, *The Way People Run*. He is Writer in Residence at Emerson College and lives in Central Massachusetts with his wife, the writer Caroline Preston, and their three sons.





ROMOLO DEL DEO, *ANTAEUS (DETAIL)*, 1999  
PHOTO: ADAM RICH

## Romolo Del Deo: Art as an Alchemical Act

by Mark Daniel Cohen

Romolo Del Deo does not think *into* his art, installing meanings like letters put into envelopes; he thinks *through* his art, permitting his implements and materials to become the roots of all he devises. As he makes clear in the very title of his exhibition, "Alchemia," to be held this summer at Berta Walker Gallery in Provincetown, he understands sculpture as a manner of conjuring, a means of magical transformation. His sculpture infuses life into the dead materials of the earth.

Art is virtually an alchemical act, as alchemy was virtually an art. The antecedent of chemistry, alchemy was practiced from early in the Christian era until the 18th century. Alchemists searched for a method of transmuting base metal into gold. Their pursuit was not material, but

spiritual and symbolic. Gold symbolized illumination and salvation, an inner wealth.

Del Deo's bronze figures bear the look of unearthed remains of classical sculptures, yet they do not directly resemble any known works of antiquity. His uncanny mastery comes out of years of work in Italy. Born and raised in Provincetown, the artist attended Castle Hill and the Cape Cod School of Art, and at 18, went to Pietrasanta to study marble carving and bronze casting. He attended Harvard University, returned to Pietrasanta to prepare his thesis, spent another two years teaching at Harvard, then moved to New York City. He has been exhibiting there and in Provincetown since the late 1980s.

The sculptures range in scale from life-sized to small figurines that stand atop tall, slender columns wreathed in twisting vines. Patinaed in a remarkable range of hues, they suggest a wide mineral variety keyed to the alchemical table of elements. The figures are not whole, so lack the classical virtue of perfection. They are shattered, as if partially reassembled from fragments. Some of the figures are missing limbs, some appear to be held together by ropes. While bound and broken, they aspire. They stretch their arms to the skies, arch backward, and squeeze their eyes shut, struggling against their binding coils. They are figures in passion, enthralled, striving for release from the earth into which they have fallen, within which, like classical statuary, they were lost—until the artist's hands gave them form.

Del Deo's sculptures are fusions of opposing forces. They are new art with the style and manner of the ancient. Del Deo says he breaks his figures in order to escape the seduction of idealized beauty. Life, for Del Deo, is bittersweet, so art must also be bittersweet. The figure must be broken, given contradiction, complexity.

Del Deo will soon exercise the urge to the spiritual in a new venue. In a national competition, the sculptor was selected by the Community of Jesus to design and execute the doors for their new basilica in Orleans, MA. The double doors will stand 15 feet high, and the design will be based on the seven days of creation. Accord-

ing to Del Deo, it will be "not programmatic but evocative." Adam will be on one door, Eve on the other. The tree will be between them. Branches will spread over the two figures, with a multitude of animals among the leaves. It will be an image of fecundity, of the world when it was fresh, "before sin, before crime, before consumption."

*Mark Daniel Cohen is a New York-based art critic and sculptor. He contributes regularly to Review magazine and Art New England.*

## Free from the Male Gaze

by Margaret Carroll-Bergman

Twenty-five years ago, Cynthia Packard's brother, Stephen, disappeared without trace while hitchhiking cross country—travelers checks to this day uncashed, the only clue. Two weeks before her brother's disappearance, Packard's father moved to Ireland. "Suddenly, the two men I loved most were gone," she said, "That's when I started to sculpt and paint."

Packard paints women—vital figures that float on a sea of color like storm-tossed lightships, vessels searching and ready to provide refuge for a lost brother, lost father, lost innocence. Each painting is a page from her diary. Despair, hope, and strength give way to a world of great female beauty. Packard's women are often nude, bounteous, full of depth, and posed in ways that indicate inner pain—a hand to the neck, a chin resting on a hand, a head down turned, or facing into the distance. Features are sometimes completely effaced; there are no eyes, no mouth, no nose, no ears, nothing to personalize the form. Packard's colors—the delicate purple of thistle, seaweed brown, algae green, sandy flesh, forsythia yellow, and a daring red—are colors found in nature, made to vibrate with human emotion.



STUDIO VIEW WITH JEN STANDING, 1999





JOHN MULCAHY WITH SELF PORTRAIT, 1998  
PHOTO STEPHEN AIKEN

## John Mulcahy: Amazing Grace *en Plein Air*

by Stephen Aiken

The John Mulcahy Gallery is in a rambling three-story Greek revival that also houses the Wellfleet Historical Society. Mulcahy sets his *plein air* landscape paintings—of views from Race Point to Bound Brook Island—in the window to dry in the sun. Inside, works are hung salon-style and there is a private, quiet aura. On one occasion I entered the gallery thinking I was alone and was startled to discover the artist sitting silently, listening to a gospel album on his hi-fi.

"Do you like Ed Ames?" he asked.

The idea behind *plein air* painting is to directly confront the transitory nature of light and form, binding the painter to the changing seasons and the flux of time. The best *plein air* painters know that the freeze frame, the captured moment, is often a lifeless thing, a bogus equivalent to the enchantment of seeing. As Wayne Thiebaud remarked with wit, "the downside of realism is taxidermy." *Premier coup*, or "first strike," is a variation on *plein air*. An Outer Cape tradition from Hawthorne to Dickinson, *premier coup* combines spontaneity with subjectivity and requires a fencer's instinct. Simply put, you go for it, you get the effect, and you leave it. The very nature of the oil sketch, its unfinished perfunctory appearance, is perfectly suited to the task. With this method Mulcahy slaps on thick and juicy globs of oil-soaked color and makes it look as easy as buttering warm bread.

We can see the technique in a December landscape. A storm is brewing and Mulcahy has wisely staked out a view close to home. As the light begins to run out in the last days of the year, so too the artist's palette is muted to a snow-washed gray. The street between the twin steeples of the town is empty and the canvas shows scars of the scraper, like tracers of half-frozen angling rain. There is a tinge of depression here, relieved by the exhilaration of being thrust out into sea and storm on this narrow land.

In recent years, self-portraiture has invigorated Mulcahy's art. At first glance the face may appear as an apparition in the residue of dry caked colors on an artist's palette. The likeness that emerges from the background is softly delineated, evoked almost entirely with color. It is not surprising that Mulcahy contemplates the divinity of his own form, for his face itself is a work of art. Mulcahy's resemblance to any number of Renaissance or Baroque portraits of Saint Jerome, in the wilderness or in study, is remarkable. Waves of rusty gray locks crown deep-set, slate-blue eyes above a billowing white beard—in short, a face even Rembrandt could envy.

Stephen Aiken is an artist and director of "234" Gallery at Hannah in Wellfleet.

Packard learned to draw from Fritz Bultman, who studied with Hans Hofmann in the late 1930s and taught Hofmann's "Push/Pull" technique to Packard. "I pretend I'm a little person walking around the objects when I'm drawing. I try to negotiate the space and create tension by filling the four corners of the canvas with volume. The object is the last thing I draw; I'm more interested in drawing the movement of air in and around the object." At first, Packard modeled for Bultman, until the day he asked her to draw with him. "After that first day of drawing, I never modeled again, and spent four years studying with Fritz," Packard recalls.

Through Bultman she found her sense of volume in the thrust and swell of the hip, the arch of the back, the round of the head, and the parabolic curve of the thigh. Bultman taught the use of a natural curve, a curve observed by living in a marine environment, where the wind is an invisible hand shaping the dunes. Lately, Packard is replacing line with light. Light illuminates the buttocks, arms, shoulders and hands with a radiant power that dances fleetingly across the figure.

Packard's mother, Anne Packard, a painter and granddaughter of turn-of-the-century Impressionist Max Bohm, is known for her expansive blue-gray skies and solitary boats. Mother and two daughters jointly run and own the Packard Gallery in Provincetown, housed in a former Christian Science Church. Their paintings were featured in Norman Mailer's film version of *Tough Guys Don't Dance*, filmed nearly a decade ago, when Packard was working as a waitress at Ciro's, painting during her free time with her firstborn child strapped to her front. Recently, she and her husband renovated the house across the street from Mailer. They now live there with their four children.

Packard paints very aggressively, using the palette knife like a mason would a mortar-filled trowel; her incessant adding and subtracting of

paint, her layering of rich color, her ever-changing line and form reveal her early training as a sculptor. The thick layering of paint creates a tactile effect. "I love paint," said Packard, scraping a wad off her clothes and rolling it into a ball between thumb and forefinger before flicking it onto the floor, "I love the pigment and the feel of the oil."

Packard's studio, a former ballet school a block from the harbor, has the ambiance of a late 19th-century Paris studio, with artists and models sharing ideas amidst stacked artists' books, still-life set-ups, and draped fabrics. The hardwood floors are splattered with paint, the exercise bar is mended with duct tape, and a Victorian sofa sits on cement blocks. Packard looks like Joan of Arc armored in the artist's uniform of paint-stained t-shirt and jeans as she talks to an art dealer in a fur coat who flew in from Atlanta to preview Packard's still-wet paintings before an upcoming show. She cannot keep up with the demand for her work by galleries in Provincetown, Atlanta, and Boston.

Painting from life, Packard develops a deep relationship with the model, who becomes something of a stand-in for the self in this visual diary. "When I work, I can hear my own voice," says Packard. "And, my paintings, hopefully, will capture this inner dialogue and engage the viewer in a conversation." A conversation on purely female terms. The female figures in Packard's paintings may have originated in a loss of essential male figures in her life, but today the loss has turned to freedom. In paintings of women whose emotions emerge as strongly as their forms, we find female figures in self-revelation, free from the male gaze.

Margaret Carroll-Bergman is the chief financial officer for Provincetown Arts. Her essay on Kathi Smith appeared in the 1997-98 issue.

# Duane Slick: Instructions on the Care and Use of White Space

by Christopher Busa

In 1974 the German artist Joseph Beuys made his first trip to America. He arrived at the airport and was taken by an ambulance to the white cube of the Rene Block Gallery in New York. There, in a cage of steel mesh with an imposing gate of iron bars, the artist lived with a wary coyote for five days. Beuys lounged on straw in a corner near a window, the sunlight pouring in, while the coyote dozed on the rumpled felt of Beuys' shepherd frock. Every day 50 copies of the *Wall Street Journal* were delivered and the coyote, named Little John, marked the pages with his urine, "signing" the paper like an artist. Beuys collected the animal's testimony, then signed and sold some pages as collaborative work. Man and animal had worked out a truce, and Beuys said he had succeeded "in making contact with the whole American trauma with the Indian, the Red Man. You could say a reckoning has to be made with the myth of coyote, and only then can this trauma be lifted."

Duane Slick learned of this piece and liked it because Beuys had come to our shores as an outsider and sought to reestablish the nation's spiritual origins. Slick's own awareness of coyote was through authentic native sources, not Beuys. He had read a lot of stories about coyote, all the while painting in an abstract expressionist mode where cancellations and corrections remain visible, like a manuscript marked up by an editor. His work became more specific. He began a series of gray and cream paintings, called "The White Paintings." Situating himself between a bright light and a blank canvas, he cast the shadow of the odd oval of his face, the dark digits of his hands, or the shadow thrown from the mask of a wolf. In white chalk, he traced where his shadow fell. He was certain that he was making more than a self-portrait. Like the "six characters in search of an author," in the play so titled by Pirandello, Slick's white paintings reveal the smoky ghosts of his several selves. The work contains details of personal autobiography, but they are less portraits of the artist than incarnations of his spirit. Slick sensed he was testing abstract art to see if it could accommodate the personal.

Under multiple lights, he cast multiple shadows, staggered and blurred side by side. He tried to draw them all; failing, he accepted the cost of choosing intangibility as his subject; he could have one image only at the cost of another. He erased the chalk, effacing the outline, and began an intensive glazing sequence, working into gesso a translucent acrylic modeling paste, honey-colored like a pale brick radiant with heat. He wanted the luminosity and depth that can be achieved by embedding layer within layer, blended at intervals by sanding and more layer-



HAND HOLDING STICKS, 1998

ing. Slick remarked that the process was essential to him in the way it slowed down the oscillation of separate shadows into a conflated image. His surface shifted. No longer complex and highly inflected, it became serene, focused, and essential. A spirit was retained as the subject vanished. Slick became aware that surface was a metaphor for consciousness, and he let the shadow areas retain an Indian tint, with a red oxide he used sparingly to darken the ground. Slick's shadow is filled with light, and his white is filled with shadow. The shadow both recedes and moves forward, a little of both. The motion is fleeting. And the departure of motion is multiplied by the little that remains. Thus we see why Slick is so slick with his strangest effect: what is fleeting appears slowed down and sub-

stantial. Transitions are possessed as moments of summary significance.

Casting forth shadows can be like casting out demons. As his white paintings grew in resonance, so did Slick's preoccupation with Coyote, which he now spelled with a capital C. Coyote was the kind of demon Slick liked. He read differing versions of this trickster in tales of various tribes, but one thing persisted: even if Coyote got into trouble, he always found an escape that kept him alive. On top of surviving, Coyote did funny things, and he seemed actually to have a good time staying alive.

When he was getting his BFA from the University of North Iowa and his MFA from the University of California at Davis, Slick's heroes were the Abstract Expressionists. Following a two-year fellowship at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, he taught painting for three years in Santa Fe at the Institute of American Indian Art, a two-year junior college of several hundred Native American students gathered from 90 nations. Slick found a way to inhabit his alter ego, Coyote, by speaking through him in performance pieces. In one, Slick recounts his experience of the artist as teacher of many tribes: "First, second, third generation Urban Indians, kids straight out of the rez, a native gay and lesbian population, christianized and traditional Indians, inter-tribals, a student population with an average age of 27, many part and mostly white Indians, African-Native Americans, foster-homed, born-again, recovering."

Inevitably, Professor Slick, a few years older than his typical student, became acutely conscious of the idea of Indian authenticity. Such a value may not exist even in an Indian school, let alone in the basement of the Smithsonian Institute where the bones of ancestors have been taken from sacred burial grounds to gather dust as secular artifacts identified with a number printed on a paper tag.

Unlike Catholic missionaries, American Indian populations, Slick realized, were not seeking converts. They did not want weekend Indians like the ones who came to gamble in the casinos of Connecticut. Slick took solace in the story his father told him about a time when he and a cousin entered a restaurant in Iowa. "We don't serve Indians," the waiter told them. "We don't want Indians. We want cheeseburgers," Slick's father replied, with the calm, penetrating wisdom of a century of meditation of



the nature of insult. Here the son learned the value of a life-saving joke. In the face of humiliation, humor could save face.

Slick became dimly aware of Coyote's humor during his teens in Cedar Falls, Iowa, where he grew up. He was embarrassed that the popular legend of Coyote had been cheapened into Roadrunner cartoons. Slick preferred Coyote to be a graffitist who smeared acne on the billboard faces of supermodels. His Coyote was not a dog—watch your throat. His Coyote did not trust artists who titled their paintings after art-theory buzz words, but he made an exception for a breakthrough work of Slick's titled *Instruction on the Care and Use of White Space*, because the title smiled at the idea that white was not owned by white people.

Indian mythology, uncluttered as a prairie desert, combines large meanings with earthy details. Slick modifies these meanings with personal inflections in his expanding role as a performance artist and maker of artist books. "Coyote in the Tall Dune Grass," his first venture beyond his base of pure painting, tells a story Slick adapted for Provincetown schoolchildren in 1992, the year of the quincentenary of Columbus' "discovery" of America. He also exhibited these books at the Albert Merola Gallery, where he continues to show. Using sand, scooping it up with his hand, he drew the story on a black blanket. When it was time to change the scene, the students lifted the blanket and the sand fell to the ground for reuse.

I summarize the story Slick told his students about his alter ego: After one clear day, during a fiery sunset, Coyote was sitting on the beach, bored, watching the waves. He had nothing to do. Behind him, off in the dunes, away from the ocean, he heard the drums of a great dance. Coyote loved dancing and followed the sound from the shore to the dunes. On the most severe exposures, where the wind whistled most sharply, the tallest grew, and here Coyote danced until dawn. With morning light, Coyote saw he had been dancing, not with people, but with gleaming stalks of dune grass. Day had destroyed the reality of his dream.

A leading Indian activist and writer, Vine Deloria, has reflected on how language has enabled white culture to justify taking the land of the nation's natives. Indians, indigenous to America, did not acknowledge supremacy over nature, as did the conquering Europeans who colonized the country. Even as African-Americans were imported against their will and treated like domesticated animals, the Native Americans were likened to wild animals who, instinctively, could not be tamed. Hunting, the Indian thanked the animal they killed for surrendering its body to the well-being of the tribe. Sharing sustained them. In the repetitions of ritual, relation is maintained when respect is shown for the removal of a resource. Several curators asked Slick to show in exhibitions inspired by the Columbus anniversary. A friend, Jaune Quick-To-See Smith, formed the Submuloc Society—Columbus spelled backwards—asking Slick to produce overtly political art for her forthcoming show.

Slick's heart groaned. He hated Message Art. How could he say so? If he loved the authentic passion of a cause, he must refuse to make one-liner art. Slick was torn, but Coyote gave him a way out. Now he could say this and mean that. He possessed the power to say two things at once. His Coyote lived in a city without pity—a realm of freedom in the artist's consciousness located in the two-dimensional reservation of his painting. Let the country be happy about the Atlantic crossing of Columbus 500 years ago. Slick saw the occasion as marking the moment when Indian culture began to decline. He did not feel like celebrating.

His father's tribe, the Sac and Fox, lived in the woodlands of Iowa until the Federal Government relocated them to the plains of Oklahoma. His mother's tribe, the Winnebago, from the Great Lakes regions of Minnesota and Wisconsin, were also relocated to Oklahoma. Slick's grandfather, Sam Slick, was witness to this massive relocation where alien tribes were forced to live in close proximity. Disease broke out. Sam Slick was the only surviving member after his family was decimated during an epidemic of smallpox. He saw their dead bodies asleep in their teepees, still and quiet. Duane Slick was pondering that memory when a gang of white boys attacked his older brother in Denver. They beat him up, threw gasoline on his trousers, and tried to set his legs on fire. But their matches, doused in the fluid, failed to ignite, and the gang slunk away. His brother would not burn.

If Coyote was a personal spirit, then Slick believed his creature was not a marketable commodity. Growing up in a ceremonial structure, Slick lived by his mother's oracular counsel. She told him, "You must tolerate what you allow." His parents saw migrations off the reservations to cities, and sorrowed at the sight of urban ghettos swollen with Indians in cages of their own substance abuse. Still, the tribes traveled, and the Plains Indians especially traversed vast space to attend oratory sessions where tribal elders offered guidance on how traditions connect with immediate communal concerns. When a cluster of family presented itself, they were welcome. Talk was not prepared; it was spontaneous, informal. Storytelling sessions were done in live time, like post-modern performance art. Here the thin wall between theater and life, storyteller and story, or speaker and audience, occasioned psychological bonding. Before he became an artist, Slick wanted to talk about his tribal feelings with others, but his parents told him never to describe the ceremonies to white people. She explained, in language Norman Mailer used against those that would praise his work for the wrong reasons, asking them, "Please do not understand too quickly." Mother told son: "They did not understand and the first thing they will do is try and take it away." Thus Slick came to see why his surface was obliged to be so slow in revealing itself.

*Christopher Busa interviewed Norman Mailer for the cover story of this issue.*

## PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION & MUSEUM

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*Charles W. Hawthorne: Two Exhibitions: Masterworks* (August 20-September 20). A selection of the artist's great oils and watercolors. *Local Hawthornes* (September 24-November 20). This exhibition will highlight Hawthorne the teacher, with examples of his class demonstrations as well as finished paintings.

#### MANY PATHS

A series of exhibitions exemplifying the range of artists drawn to the art colony: *The Boys from Indiana* (June 4-July 5). Philip Malicoat, Bruce McKain & George Yater. *Micha Richter* (July 30-August 23). *William and Lucy L'Engle* (July 30-August 16). *Jack Pierson* (August 27-September 13).

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*Forum 49* (July 30-August 16) will recreate an important 1949 exhibition of paintings (Forum 49) which included many of the Abstract Expressionists who would the following year make 1950 a "turning point" in the American art scene. (All summer a series of panel discussion -- Forum 99 -- will recreate the series that took place 50 years ago.)

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**Ex-Friends: Falling Out with Allen Ginsberg, Lionel and Diana Trilling, Lillian Hellman, Hannah Arendt, and Norman Mailer**

by Norman Podhoretz

*The Free Press*

As a brilliant leftist literary critic launching his career in New York during the 1950s, Norman Podhoretz was surrounded by an impressive group of friends. When Podhoretz began drifting to the Right during the late 1960s, most of his friends became ex-friends. His latest memoir explores the development and disintegration of some of those relationships. *Ex-Friends:*

*Falling Out with Allen Ginsberg, Lionel and Diana Trilling, Lillian Hellman, Hannah Arendt, and Norman Mailer* devotes a chapter to each famous name listed in the subtitle, evoking a milieu where opinions on Marxism, Stalinism, McCarthyism, and Zionism—not to mention literature and poetry—led intellectuals to intense closeness or intense antagonism.

Podhoretz and his peers were known as the New York Intellectuals and nicknamed The Family, a term that Podhoretz didn't coin, but with typical boastfulness claims to have popularized. Family members discussed and debated their ideas within the pages of *Partisan Review* and *Commentary* (of which

Podhoretz was editor for 35 years) and at a continual string of intellectually charged, and occasionally fractious, dinner parties. (Podhoretz met Hellman at a Trilling party and Mailer at a Hellman party. He fought with Ginsberg at a Mailer party and with Lionel Trilling at a party given by labor journalist Arnold Beichman. His failure to invite Mailer to a dinner party he threw for Jackie Kennedy contributed to their falling out.)

Podhoretz's anecdotes enliven his descriptions of this formidable group of thinkers. Lillian Hellman is best-rendered, emerging as an "extremely and unreasonably demanding" woman whose lavish lifestyle belied her frequent complaints of being broke. Podhoretz, 27 to Hellman's 52 when they met, was easily seduced by her fame and personality—he describes her as "playful, mischievous, bitchy, earthy, and always up for a laugh." They frequently went to the movies together, and Podhoretz is still

charmed by the memory of Hellman's inability to follow the action on the screen: "Why did he say that?" or "Where did she come from?" she would whisper querulously, and between bouts of imperfectly suppressed laughter I would try to explain." So captivated was Podhoretz by Hellman's big personality and, he admits, by the advantages she might confer on his career, that he praised her writing even though he found her plays conventional and her memoirs self-serving and dishonest. It wasn't Podhoretz's insincerity but his rightward drift that ultimately ended the relationship; Hellman and Podhoretz became ex-friends after *Commentary* began attacking the New Left and the late-'60s counter-culture as "anti-American."

The chapters on Allen Ginsberg and Norman Mailer reveal Podhoretz's ambivalent relationship to the liberalism with which he grew up and the radicalism with which he experimented before moving firmly to the Right. He describes a tense evening with Allen Ginsberg, more a nemesis than a friend, and Jack Kerouac in 1958. Kerouac invited Podhoretz to Ginsberg's New York apartment to discuss an unflattering *Partisan Review* article, "The Know-Nothing Bohemians," in which Podhoretz characterized the Beats as spiritually bankrupt. Podhoretz refused to smoke pot with them; Ginsberg attacked him all night for his middle-class values and failure to recognize his and Kerouac's genius. Podhoretz, by then married with three children and working hard to support his family, saw himself as a critic of "the establishment" even while realizing that he looked pretty establishment himself. Thus he attacked the Beats in order to defend his own choices. He confesses to an attraction to the Beat lifestyle: "God knows...there were moments of resentment at the burdens I had seen fit to shoulder, moments when I felt cheated and when I dreamed of breaking out of the limits I had imposed upon myself." The attraction existed simultaneously with repulsion, however, embodied for Podhoretz in Ginsberg's homosexuality. Podhoretz suspected Ginsberg of "having become a homosexual not out of erotic compulsion but...as another way of expressing his contempt for normal life." For his part, Ginsberg remained strangely obsessed with Podhoretz, calling him, in a 1987 interview, "a sort of sacred personage in my life, in a way: someone whose vision is so opposite from mine that it's provocative and interesting."

As with Ginsberg, Podhoretz felt himself both drawn to and repulsed by Mailer. Even though Podhoretz saw in Mailer's celebration of the hipster "the same pernicious cultural and political implications" as he saw in the Beats, he admired Mailer's fiction. The two became fast friends after Podhoretz published a favorable essay on Mailer in *Partisan Review*, helping to legitimize him in the eyes of those who regarded best-selling authors as at best middlebrow. While dazzled by Mailer's force of personality, the more conventional of the Normans was made uncomfortable by Mailer's preoccupations with drugs and sex. Still, at Mailer's behest, Podhoretz on different occasions smoked pot and attended an

**NORMAN  
PODHORETZ  
EX-  
FRIENDS**

FALLING OUT WITH ALLEN GINSBERG, LIONEL AND DIANA TRILLING,  
LILLIAN HELLMAN, HANNAH ARENDT, AND NORMAN MAILER

BOOKS



orgy: the marijuana gave him "an unpleasant feeling in the stomach," and the orgy was "a total and humiliating disaster." As Podhoretz sees it, the friendship fell apart when, in part to retaliate after being excluded from Podhoretz's dinner party for Jackie Kennedy, Mailer published a negative review of Podhoretz's 1967 memoir, *Making It*, in *Partisan Review*. *Making It* was met by almost universal opprobrium from Podhoretz's peers, who found his paean to worldly success and bourgeois values tasteless. In a subsequent memoir, 1979's *Breaking Ranks* (which detailed his break from the Left), Podhoretz claimed that Mailer had actually liked the book but had joined in bashing it in order to avoid jeopardizing his standing with the left-wing establishment. Podhoretz now says he "recognized that there was nothing—nothing—that would offend Norman Mailer more than to be accused of lacking in courage." After *Breaking Ranks* was published, the two didn't speak for 15 years.

Podhoretz's present incarnation as a neoconservative of course shapes his recollections of the old days. He believes that the Family's ideas have had a lingering and destructive hold on American culture, with its antipathy to capitalism and its acceptance of the counterculture. Podhoretz began to identify as a neoconservative, becoming an ardent supporter of Ronald Reagan, following the publication of *Breaking Ranks*. Neoconservatism attracted primarily those Jewish intellectuals who identified with cold war liberalism prior to the 1970s but who moved away from the Left as it came to be associated with the counterculture and the black power movement. Eventually neoconservatives crafted a coalition—at times uneasy—with the broader conservative movement, united by anti-communist and anti-social welfare positions. Despite the considerable political triumphs of this conservative alliance, Podhoretz writes as if his side has lost. He and his new conservative friends, he says, "have managed to join forces as a dissenting minority of 'heretical' intellectuals who are trying to break the virtual monopoly that the worst of my ex-friends hold (even from beyond the grave) over the cultural institutions of this country." Since breaking with the Family, he declares with bravado, he has "shouldered the burden of challenging the regnant leftist culture that pollutes the spiritual and cultural air we all breathe."

Podhoretz's representation of himself as the underdog (whether genuinely felt or not) may help to explain the book's tone. Winners, after all, are expected to be gracious; setting himself up as the loser, Podhoretz is free to take swipes at his former friends. He is reluctant to turn on his old mentor, Lionel Trilling, but all of the book's other subjects are treated to his condescending literary judgments. Mailer is on the receiving end of the worst of these: Podhoretz describes his later work as silly, foolish, and embarrassing, yet he feigns empathy as he describes a group of unnamed "younger literary intellectuals" dismissing Mailer as "a laughing-stock." Some of Podhoretz's attacks come off as

petty, not least because, with the exception of Mailer, the ex-friends he concentrates on are dead.

While he focuses primarily on what he sees as the negative impact of Family thought, Podhoretz still regrets the Family's demise, claiming that its disappearance has left American intellectual life in a sorry state. He traces the decline of intellectual community to the postwar expansion of colleges and universities, which gradually led to an expansion of the audience for high culture. To Podhoretz, the resulting proliferation of "highbrow" magazines and books has led to a diluted and factionalized intellectual life, with writers choosing to publish primarily in the company of those who agree with them. The result: "a diminution in the serious discussion of serious ideas." Most conservatives don't believe that "serious discussion" occurs at the university level, dismissing academe as the bastion of tenured radicals who churn out over-politicized and substandard scholarship. Podhoretz shares this opinion. He makes a disparaging reference to "the literary world of the 1990s—the deconstructionists, the feminists, the Africanists, and the assorted multiculturalists," and, in a typical conservative caricature, he claims that universities have "enshrined" the idea "that no real difference in quality existed between Shakespeare and Jackie Collins."

Unlike academe, Podhoretz suggests, the Family provided true "intellectual community." Without it, he writes, "we lack a center around which we can gather and in which, whether through collaboration or competition, agreement or dissension, we can deepen and refine our thinking." But Podhoretz fails to demonstrate for whom, other than an elite group of thinkers, the Family actually constituted a center. His feelings of loss may in large measure reflect his move from the literary world to a political one where, Podhoretz readily admits, intellectual assumptions are rarely recognized, let alone analyzed or debated.

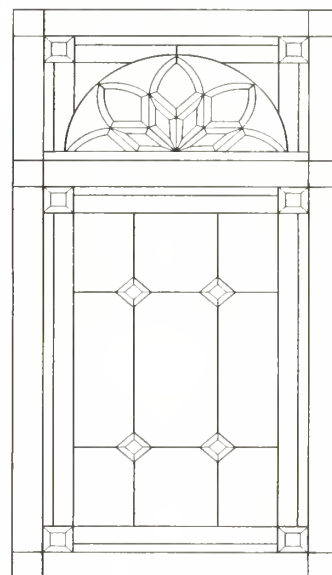
At the same time that Podhoretz mourns the loss of intellectual discourse, he also romanticizes the simple folk who never knew intellectual discourse to begin with and who just want to watch their sports without Uncle Sam getting in the way. At the beginning of *Ex-Friends*, Podhoretz declares that "the biggest lie ever propagated by a philosopher was Socrates' self-aggrandizing assertion that the unexamined life is not worth living." The quotation serves as an odd sort of epigraph to an occasionally hairsplitting re-examination of past relationships which is itself at times self-aggrandizing. Then again, the quote may just be a measure of Podhoretz's own ambivalence—not only towards the usefulness of intellectual discourse, but towards the former friends whose politics he now finds dangerous and in some cases "evil," yet who he can't help but miss nonetheless.

—BARBARA SPINDEL

*Barbara Spindel is a doctoral candidate in American Studies at the University of Minnesota. She lives in New York.*

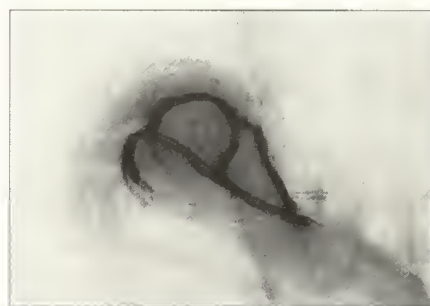
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## Julien Levy: Portrait of an Art Gallery

Edited by Ingrid Schaffner  
and Lisa Jacobs

MIT Press

Staying in sync with the zeitgeist is a tricky thing. Most of us sense the alignment of our own thinking with that of the world's for a few years at best. Then for the rest of our lives we reminisce about that extraordinary time when we felt the world was "right," was how it should be. In rare instances, there are those unique individuals who make the world's thinking shift to accommodate them. They embody the zeitgeist. To remove them from their age would make history unravel into meaninglessness.

Such is the life of Julien Levy, who, along with his famously fabulous Julien Levy Gallery, is the subject of this book (or is it a catalogue?—an exhibition of the same title was held at New York's Equitable Gallery in 1998). The two—Levy the Man and Levy the Gallery—are such inseparable entities that although the book proposes to present a "portrait of the Julien Levy Gallery," Levy's dynamic character, dramatic personal life, and stunning good looks often become the focus. Levy and his gallery, along with such newly founded arbiters of taste as the Museum of Modern Art and the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Connecticut, helped usher in—some have said helped "steal"—the cultural avant-garde from Paris, defining what it was to be "modern."

The Julien Levy Gallery opened its doors to Manhattan in 1931, and closed 18 years and four locations later in 1949. Within that time, Levy introduced Americans to the works of the Surrealists and Neo-Romantics (little known figures to Americans at that time), and was one of the first dealers to esteem photography and film. Fashionable gallery-hoppers, eager for the newest of the new, saw the work of Eugène Atget, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Joseph Cornell, Salvador Dalí, Walt Disney, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Walker Evans, Leonor Fini, Naum Gabo, Alberto Giacometti, Arshile Gorky, Frida Kahlo, Fernand Léger, René Magritte, Man Ray, Lee Miller, Ben Shahn, and Dorothea Tanning suspended on the gallery's stark white walls. (Most galleries of the time had velvet walls, a leftover from Victorian days, while Levy took after his predecessor Alfred Stieglitz's immaculate Gallery 291.) They also were treated to opening-night cocktail parties, film screenings, exhibitions of costume design, and, if the sophisticates were lucky, an impromptu chess game played between Levy and Max Ernst, and refereed by Marcel Duchamp.

As Steven Watson points out in one of the book's four short essays, Levy "enjoyed a precocious talent for affiliation—he connected himself with the Right Crowd before they were widely recognized as such." His life was consumed with fame and with knowing and being a part of the "Who's Who" of modernism. As an undergraduate at Harvard he began life-long

friendships with Alfred Barr, Jr., Philip Johnson, Arthur Everett ("Chick") Austin, Lincoln Kirstein, Agnes Rindge, Kirk Askew, and Henry-Russell Hitchcock. Soon after leaving Harvard (he never graduated), Levy met and married Joella Haweis, the poet-artist Mina Loy's daughter. And although Julien and Joella eventually divorced, Levy remained close—perhaps too close—with his "elusive, beautiful" ex-mother-in-law, his artistic and social mentor. Through Loy, Levy's Paris connection, he was introduced to the "Montparnasse Crowd"—Ezra Pound, Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, and Constantin Brancusi, among others.

If it seems as if Levy's life was about a long series of names, dropped at just the right moment, it was. Or at least that's one conclusion to be had after examining the map of "six degrees of separation," hand-drawn by Levy himself, which makes up the book's end papers. On the map, Levy writes his name at the center of this far-flung, avant-garde family tree, with large branches entitled "Paris," "Photography," "Harvard & Museums," "Neo-Romantics," and "Surrealists," and smaller offshoots holding significant names and their real or imagined affiliation ("Joella Levy, married," "John McAndrew, gallery sec'y," "Paul Sachs, advisor," "Arthur Craven, idol figure").

Co-editors and curators Ingrid Schaffner and Lisa Jacobs' attempt to "offer accounts of Levy and his gallery from several perspectives" is modeled on Levy's surrealistic arrangement of his book, *Surrealism*. Their book includes critical essays, personal reminiscences, a generous number of color plates of works once seen at the gallery, and a thorough and invaluable chronology of the gallery's history. The essays, most notably Ingrid Schaffner's "Alchemy of the Gallery," and Steven Watson's "Julien Levy: Exhibitionist and Harvard Modernist," try hard to rectify the perception of Levy as a "collector of people" through elaborate historical positionings and solid, enjoyable art historical writing. They present several scenarios: Levy the "wealthy young man...embark[ing] on [a] visionary ven-



JAY LEYDA, PORTRAIT OF JULIEN LEVY, C. 1932  
COLLECTION JEAN FARLEY LEVY/COURTESY OF  
THE EQUITABLE GALLERY, NEW YORK



young man...embark[ing] on [a] visionary venture;" Levy the publisher/writer; Levy the proto-Surrealist; Levy the Harvard modernist.

Ultimately, one trusts Dorteia Tanning's assessment of why Levy left such an indelible mark on the lives of so many contemporaries: he had "the air of an extraterrestrial emissary, fascinated and amazed by everything he saw and heard, his persona was a magnet for adjectives. They swarmed around him, clung to his profile (lovely to draw), hair (shiny and black), silhouette (slim, gracile), the ensemble elegant, suave, debonair, elusive." Again, Julien Levy embodied the zeitgeist. To know Levy—just as later, to know Clement Greenberg or Andy Warhol—was to be a major player. To not, was to lament that you didn't. "I thank him," writes an appreciative Tanning, "for having counted me in."

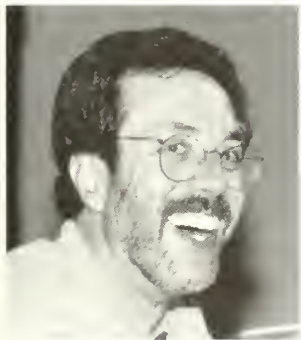
—ANNETTE FERRARA

Annette Ferrara directs Alan Koppel Gallery in Chicago and is the founder and editor-in-chief of TENbyTEN, a magazine of visual culture.

## Leaving Pico

by Frank X. Gaspar

University Presses of New England



In E. Annie Proulx's *The Shipping News*, the isolated inhabitants of Gaze Island, Newfoundland, make an unexpected discovery in a box of donated books:

There must have been a hundred books in there, picture books for children, a big red book on volcanoes that gripped everybody's mind the whole winter—it was a geological study, you see, and there was plenty of meat in it. The last chapter in the book was about ancient volcanic activity in Newfoundland. That was the first time anybody had ever seen the word Newfoundland in a book. It just about set us on fire—an intellectual revolution. That this place was in a book. See, we thought we was all alone in the world.

Frank Gaspar's first book of poetry, *The Holyoke*, was my volcano book. I discovered the thin blue and beige volume in the Provincetown Public Library during my first summer home after college. While I know that this place, Provincetown, is mentioned in many books, nothing I had read before *The Holyoke* depicted the town as I had known it growing up. Gaspar shared my mixed feelings for this place. Finding

his version of the town, with all its faults, felt like lifting a boat's hatch after a storm to let in light and air.

*Leaving Pico*, Gaspar's first novel, is the bittersweet story of a summer in the life of Joachim Carvalho, a Portuguese boy growing up in Provincetown in the late 1950s. Joachim is born into a world that doesn't quite make sense, since so much is hidden from him. For me, the novel is most of all about silence and the ways in which people try to break it. The Carvalho family is silent about their past, the stories of the Portuguese are mostly unwritten, and the onslaught of tourism leaves natives like Joachim feeling invisible.

For the first half of the novel, Joachim is constantly seeking someone to tell him even the most basic things: Who was his father? Why did his grandfather bring the family here from the Azores? Why did his grandmother return to the old country for good? What is the mysterious shame his grandfather carries? A typical conversation with his grandfather goes as follows:

"Avo," I said, "there's so much that goes on that nobody talks about. You. Whatever happened to...to grandma?"

"Back to the old country," said my grandfather quickly. "That's that. It doesn't have anything to do with you."

"And what about you? *Tia* makes it out like there was some big trouble."

"What do you care about such things? You have a roof over your head. You have plenty to eat."

"Our family," I started to say. Then I didn't know where I was going with it. I stopped. I couldn't get any more words to come out. John Joseph was quiet, too, and we sat in a gloomy silence until the gulls on shore raised up again, crying and circling above the clumps of beachgrass where they made their nests.

Most of all, he questions his religion: Do the saints really hear his petitions? Facing barren parts of the landscape, he senses, "There was a wilderness here that nothing—no powers in heaven—presided over."

This struggle with oppressive quiet is not just Joachim's. The community as a whole struggles to find messages in unlikely places. When fishermen bring up strange old objects in their nets, people gather to study the relics intently, as if these mute things held answers. These unidentifiable pieces of ships are strung up in the window of "Juney's Tap" and eventually sold.

*Leaving Pico* is sad and funny at the same time. In an attempt to open up the vast Atlantic silence, to tune back into the old country, Joachim's great uncle and "Elvio the Shoemaker" salvage a radio off a shipwreck. The radio needs an antenna, and in true Provincetown jury-rig style, they get a bedspring from the dump, install it on the roof, wire it to the radio, and turn the contraption in the general direction of the Azores. Night after night, they pick up a jumble of languages, but never a word of Portuguese.

Another wonderfully funny scene involves two summer people, women in wide-brimmed

straw hats, who arrive at the family's backyard clambake and declare themselves Bolsheviks to anyone who will listen. Then they promptly get drunk and fall into the duck pen. However, around the center of the novel, there is an acknowledgement of the great things that can happen when different layers of the community come together. Lew and Roger, the family's two summer boarders, bring a gift for Joachim: a box of books that changes everything.

Out of this box of books, histories, and legends of explorers, Joachim and his grandfather, John Joseph, begin to cobble together a history for themselves, an explanation to fill the silences, as jury-rigged as the radio. This made-up story, a fiction within a fiction, acts as a replacement for the answers the boy never gets, and as a vehicle for the old man to tell his life story without putting his name to it. (John Joseph, as far as I can tell, being too young to have known him, is modeled on John J. Gaspie, whose generation, the generation of Manny Zora and of my own grandfather, is fading into legend.)

Gaspar examines the convoluted ways in which people go about trying to break a long silence. The invented story satisfies much of what the boy needed to know and emphasizes how hard it is to separate the truth from fiction. After enough silence, no one knows anymore what really happened. John Joseph at one moment claims he can't separate the truth from old stories: "I'm telling you I don't know the difference. And neither does anyone else, and if they did they'd tell you."

The layering of stories in this Provincetown novel reminds me of the structure of the town itself, the community that Mary Heaton Vorse compared to an onion. Gaspar's style suggests a kind of cross-pollination: a clear link to the storytelling tradition of the Portuguese and to the simplicity of a Mary Hackett painting. Gaspar gave his first hometown reading last summer as part of the Portuguese Festival. Upon discovering his first book of poetry, I felt alone in my love of his work—it wasn't even carried in local bookstores. But the reading attracted a standing-room only crowd. Even better, people from every layer of the town were there together, not just the Portuguese.

After the reading, an elderly woman in a wheelchair beside me sighed and said, "Poets say what the rest of us cannot." Breaking silence is always dangerous in a small town, and maybe it takes an exile to do it. Today Gaspar lives in California and rarely visits. We can only be grateful that his poetry and fiction have set the stories of the Provincetown Portuguese into the literature of this place.

—OONA PATRICK

Oona Patrick's memoir appears elsewhere in this issue. She is a recipient of a "One Hundred Artists in the Community" grant from the Provincetown Community Compact.



## Where the Time Goes

by R.D. Skillings

University Presses of New England

Roger Skillings' new collection of short stories, *Where the Time Goes*, might aptly be called, *P-town Revisited*. Twenty years have passed since the publication of *P-town Stories (Or The Meatrack)* (Apple-Wood Press, 1980). Those of us eager for images of our town, its inhabitants and folkways, have had a considerable wait.

*P-town Stories* portrayed the mores and mindsets of the "washashores" of the '60s and '70s, with an emphasis on sex (casual, anonymous, even random, sometimes violent), drugs (acid, dope, pot, pills), hassles with the cops, dancing at Piggy's, infidelities, failed relationships, a sense of disenfranchisement, a lack of connection or control, and lots and lots of drinking. In the words of a character in "The News," "Those were the good old days, when it was well known that the main fare of genius was alcohol, and the solvent of all obstacles more alcohol."

The characters in *Where The Time Goes* are not immune to the lure of drugs and drink, but they are trying to face their demons. In "The Line," Emily "slipped a new joint into her pack of Camels" before heading to the Fo'c'sle, but her friend resists, remaining in her studio to work. Resistance can be imperfect, even episodic and in this collection, rehab is a recurrent theme.

I witnessed (and, yes, experienced) some of the '60s and all of the '70s in Provincetown, and it is amusing to recognize places and even people in *P-town Stories*. I also remember the incredible charm of the Portuguese and the impressive struggles of serious, hard-working artists and writers. These people are under-represented in *P-town Stories*, but fare much better in *Where The Time Goes*. One artist "had stayed in her studio for 10 years." In "Paint," a group of old men sit around a fireplace at "the club" on Saturday night, bemoaning the decline of serious artists, serious talk, even serious drinking. Says one: "P-town's a graveyard for artists and writers. It's too comfortable. It's insidious. The pursuit of happiness is a way of life here. No pain, no art. Time just seeps away. Too much drainage, so to speak."

"Townies" or "natives" are less apparent than artists. In "Coughlan Dice at His Closet Window," a local boy drops out of M.I.T. and returns to town and "his phlegmatic townsmen," who are "glad to have their faith confirmed that there's nothing up there beyond the bridge, nothing worth leaving town for." Aside from a recipe for "Portuguese hot dog stew," the only other significant reference to that population is in "The Ages of Death," in which a character describes the timelines of his family as "like the clock over Portuguese."

Skillings' real increase in diversity is in representing the gay population of Provincetown.

While the baseline perspective in *Where The Time Goes* is still "straight," gay people are far more often and far more fully (and sympathetically) described than in *P-town Stories*. The opening piece, entitled "That's P-town," describes a man who tries on a skirt in "Silk & Feathers." ("If you drip on that you just bought it," he is informed.) Gay readers will find their town faithfully rendered in these stories. (And I hope that we all are comfortable enough to enjoy the narrator of "Doggy," who refers to the past as "back in the days when dogs ran free and men weren't women.")

In 20 years, the inhabitants of Provincetown have become more diverse, more mature, and perhaps less chemically dependent. What else? Certainly, some things have not changed, like the lack of affordable yearround housing. But now the "greed-crazed rents" are exacerbated by the "condo plague." "Everybody's getting evicted," says a character in "Ashes." The effects of market transformation are depicted in clear and poignant terms: Commercial Street is "a shopping mall" and "The Fo'c'sle, Piggy's, the old A-House, all are gone into other things." The conversion of the Fo'c'sle is greatly detailed, and I excerpt it here for those who share with me a personal sense of loss: "Next she ruined the bar, my last resort and refuge, a dim, dingy, sullen den of stolid, unkempt, oblivious men...Now where earwig had bred and cricket skreaked an electric fireplace glowed. Fresh flowers, blithe jazz, big prices, chic booze cozied a sociable crowd and ousted the old." It still hurts.

The changes in town are part of a deeper economic shift, and though Skillings' stories have little to do with fishermen, there are ominous hints: "back when there were fish," "boats falling apart," and "only a handful of real fishermen left." This last is from a barroom conversation in which a woman describes the appeal of the "beautiful" New Bedford fishermen who, still working, occasionally come to town, with "good-humored faces."

No change has been more far-reaching in Provincetown since *P-town Stories* than AIDS. Some of the stories describing the scourge, such as "The Spiritus Step," merge the experience of AIDS with new-found spirituality. Says one character, "The more I understand about love the more I realize that AIDS for me is the result of self-neglect...What needed change was me, not the AIDS." "All lives disappoint" is the revelation of another person with AIDS. This mood inflects much of *Where The Time Goes*. One depressed character in "Ashes" proclaims, "Nothing's the same anymore. Everybody's dried out, for one thing, or aged out, or left town...Even the weather's fucked up." There is a resignation in the characters—what someone once called "the biological move to the right" that most of us inexorably pursue. Skillings captures this dark shadow.

But what has he missed? The influence of the Portuguese on the last century of Provincetown history is neglected. Perhaps, as this century closes, they are moving off the page of local his-

tory—all the more reason that they be noted. What else? There is only a single reference to whale-watching, although this has grown to be a major component of the summer season, with its own population of seasonal workers—captains, mates, naturalists, cooks, and galley people—many of whom call the Old Colony, an oft-referred to locale in Skillings' work, "the office." We do not meet a restaurant worker, shopkeeper, or clerk—those who spend tedious hours at the mercy of the tourists they pray will come through the door. Nor is there mention of the guesthouse scene or the Center for Coastal Studies, around for 20 years. Nor the carpenters, builders, masons, and house painters. Nor the town employees, the DPW, the clerks, the cops. Nor the mailcarriers—what stories they must have!

Finally, Skillings' sense of place is established most firmly through his characters, but lacks reference to the natural surroundings that make Provincetown unique, heartbreakingly beautiful, and restorative. Outside the Bradford, the Old Colony, the Fo'c'sle, and the Vet's, there is a world largely undescribed, short of a brief note of a memorial service at Herring Cove, or some-one painting "the ponds."

What about the famous Cape light? What about the sand that lives in the cracks of the macadam of every street, and will find its way into your hair and clothes? Where are the dunes and shacks? What about the uneasy alliance of bay and town, with the smell of seaweed stinking in our very laps, and tidal incursions into Commercial Street. Or the gulls crying out at the Point every spring? Or the dark and wild and stunningly beautiful Azorean face one might see on the wharf?

Perhaps I am looking for another book. It is unfair to complain about omissions in a work as full as this one. Skillings dedicates *Where the Time Goes* "to the old P-town. Long live the new." The book is more about the new. Certainly, the growth of the gay community is the biggest new story we have. Skillings documents this phenomenon in the very funny and exquisitely revealing "Sandbox," in which a straight single mother deals with her daughter's playdate—a little boy with "two mommies" who wants to be a girl: "I don't know. I think their whole lives are about women. He may have got the idea that it's not so good to be a man in this world."

*Where the Time Goes* is full of moments in which Skillings reveals his grasp of the town. In "Paint," an aged artist complains that his scrotal implant pump is not working. "Call a plumber," someone says. "Quick! While it's winter and you can still get one." Some things never change. As the narrator of "Ashes" remarks, "This is still Provincetown, though it doesn't always feel like it."

—DENNIS MINSKY

*Dennis Minsky has lived some or all of each year in Provincetown since 1968, and plans to continue doing so indefinitely.*



## Defiance

by Carole Maso

Dutton

In *Defiance*, there is a moment when narrator Bernadette O'Brien remembers herself at five years old. That was the year she wanted to be Ophelia for Halloween. Even as a child she identified with the drowned girl, the pale female apparition who lives beneath the dark male narrative. It's a metaphor that could easily apply to Maso's writing itself: each book is one more manifestation of the submerged girl—the female voice that speaks in fragments, whispers, the swirling waters of repetition. From her first novel, *The Art Lover*, to her latest, Maso's unmistakable tone has never faltered or tried to account for itself. In this way she's a true writer's writer. Her flooded language is purifying, a reminder of why writing happens in the first place.

For a long time Maso occupied the cultural margins along with other so-called "experimental" writers. Her books were released by small presses, and she published passionate rants in the journal *Conjunctions* about her trials and tribulations as a publishing industry outcast. She could be devastating on the subject of sexist editors like Gordon Lish, who tried to get her to rewrite her brilliant novel *Ghost Dance* because he didn't get it. She advocated a kind of writing influenced by the ideals of French feminism, in which language does not name and still the world but rather subverts it with multiple meanings, echoes, strange music.

Recently Maso's luck has turned; she has been embraced by the industry, receiving big grants, prominent reviews, and a post as head of Brown's MFA program. Maybe popularity has gone to her head and momentarily clouded her judgment, because *Defiance* is a ridiculous book. The plot is melodramatic and implausible. About 50 pages into it, I stopped believing the story at all, and had to stare at the text as a weird artifact of a very peculiar and misguided period in American publishing.

Finally Maso makes it to the big time, and there's no one to edit her, to tell her when her ideas have totally run off course.

*Defiance* is the story of Bernadette O'Brien, a brilliant mathematician who is at the top of her game. She's teaching at Harvard, discovering equations, charming her male students, and occasionally taking them back to her house and screwing their brains out. Problem is, Bernadette has some deep, buried anger, and those Harvard feminist theory professors tend to awaken it. They talk in bars about the way male-ness has undermined the world.

In a postmodern feminist rage Bernadette murders two of her young male students; she refers to them as her dear "phallogocentrics." Soon afterward she's sent to the Big House, and eventually to death row. "Defiance" is the diary she keeps there, waiting for the electric chair. Bernadette writes about being such an ordinary

"diary keeper" among the lowly death row inmates, ironic after a life of genius and stardom:

"Diary keeper, a silly ordinary life at this stage—my small pink book, my lock and key. To be normal at this late date. Reading magazines, gossiping. The girls giggle, polish my nails! But I am a monster." The condescension is palpable.

Maso has attempted to create an eloquent narrator who is also a murderer, but we never believe it for an instant. Bernadette talks about how "detached" she feels, but the death row diary is all about attachment, expression, memory, impulse. Bernadette is a lot like Maso's past narrators: she sounds self-aware and subtle and canny. She sounds like someone who has really nice shoes in her closet. Bernadette is rendered as always in beautiful language, and her past reads like an incantation, or a dream. But ultimately she's a mirage, a charade, a flimsy, flawed product of a great writer's imagination.

As a true Maso fan, I'm going to treat *Defiance* as a one-off, a false move, like when Neil Young made a techno album. Maso is out of her element, she clearly knows little about the criminal mind, or about the social realities of punishment. If you want to read a book about a woman on death row, read Beverly Lowry's *Crossed Over: A Murder, A Memoir*, or see Nick Broomfield's documentary *Aileen Wuornos, Portrait of a Serial Killer*. Just don't read *Defiance*. It might make you feel like killing someone.

—EMILY WHITE

*Emily White's fiction has appeared in the Iowa Review, the Greensboro Review, and other publications. She is currently at work on a nonfiction book about the cultural myths surrounding female promiscuity.*

## Dog in the Dunes

by Barbara E. Cohen

Andrews McMeel Publishing

For a week in the fall of 1996, Provincetown artist Barbara Cohen retreated to a dune shack in the Provincelands "to be quiet, to paint, and to be alone." But she wasn't alone. As anyone who's been profoundly in love with an animal knows, a woman in the wilds needs her dog beside her. And so Cohen cajoled the Outer Cape Artist-in-Residence Consortium to bend the rules and allow this one artist to bring along her cherished black Labrador, Gabe. Though Cohen didn't know it at the time, those sweet days together would evolve into *Dog in the Dunes*, a wordless, poignant tribute to Gabe, who died of a rare illness the following year.

The images Cohen offers in this little jewel of a book chronicle the magic of the dunes through a dog's eyes. "Compelled by Gabe, photographing his every move, brought me closer



BARBARA COHEN, *DOG IN THE DUNES*, 1996

to the smells and sounds and vistas of the dunes," writes Cohen in her brief introduction. "Sharing the isolated time and space with Gabe took me home to what I believe to be important... simplicity."

In her signature hand-painted Polaroids, Cohen dogs Gabe, as it were, from the shack's spartan interior to the surrounding swales, through the rubble of a defunct lifesaving station and down to the shore to huddle before a fiery sunset. Gabe's cherry red collar glows against a landscape of muted amber and teal, or forms a medley with primary-colored bottles, a dish, a bucket, a dinner plate. He stalks, he snoozes, he eats, he peers in and he peers out. By turns wistful, ecstatic, vigilant, or immersed in doggie dreams, Gabe seems always to be searching for something—his soggy tennis ball, perhaps, or a mouse, or the advance of a mighty wave. A creature full of simple gratitude and understated intelligence, Gabe is a dog with an agenda, even if that agenda is, as Cohen learns for the umpteenth time in their years together, simply to be.

*Dog in the Dunes* is more than a beautiful book to flip through again and again. It's an affirmation of a truth known to all dog people: dogs don't just protect, comfort and amuse us, they also remind us of the poetry in everyday moments.

—SUSAN V. SELIGSON

*Susan V. Seligson has written for many national magazines, including the New York Times Magazine, The Atlantic, Redbook, and Allure. Her column, "The Walking Fool," appears regularly in the Provincetown Banner.*



## Century Dead Center

by George Economou

*Left Hand Books*

Toward the end of George Economou's new book of poems, *Century Dead Center*, there is a four-page "List of titles for stories never to be written." Among the rejects that compose this poem—"Boat Train to Montana," "Readin' Writin' Smokin' & Drinkin,'" and my personal favorite (for reasons that elude me), "Than to be in Carolina"—one finds the intriguing title "An Evening in Kingfisher." Happily, Economou lied about this last one, for two pages later we come upon the story-poem, "An Evening in Kingfisher." "Entering Kingfisher, Oklahoma," it begins, "The Buckle on the Wheat Belt," and goes on to narrate a comic encounter at a booster party, all male, for the Oklahoma State University Sooners. A long American history of migration and cultural friction is laid on the line, but ever so lightly:

[He] squints

at my crimson-bordered OU name tag  
offering his hand to mine which he

begins to squeeze

and asks me where I'm from.

—"The university."

—"Well, I kin see that. I mean with

a name

like that where are yuh from?

Looking back at his tag

which reads "'Huck' Rice"

and understanding what he's getting at,

—"Just moved here from New York,

but I was born in Montana."

He squeezes harder,

—"But that's not an American name."

—"Sure it is, from Greece.

... The handshake ends in a tie

and I'm grateful for the summers

spent opening oysters in Wellfleet.

The poem ends with a moment of surprisingly affectionate parting:

Leaving Kingfisher, I try not to hear

the obvious literary echoes

and focus rather on the odd sincerity

of my dialogue with Huck

Greek, and an American boy from Montana, New York, Wellfleet, and Norman, Oklahoma, possessing a literary memory as deep as this geography is vast, Economou gives us the quintessentially American mix of edgy sincerity

but to emotion, and attention to the feel of the world—all delivered with deeply learned craft.

There are Wellfleet poems that meditate on small moments of domestic life, the birds at the bird



GEORGE ECONOMOU, 1892, 1990

feeder, summer people at the backyard picnic table; there are poems as vast as the prairie and high country of Montana; there is the unmistakable sound of New York, arch, watchful, sly, witty, ironic; and there is the all-pervasive Greece, sometimes directly, as in the beautiful translations of Cavafy, Seferis, and the ancient lyricists, but also in a lyric sensibility that is very hard to name but easy to feel. This sensibility makes a combination of deep memory and intense observation of the random moments of ordinary life into a song worth singing forever.

Economou meditates on the making of poetry itself, especially in the section of the book entitled "Voluntaries." In music "voluntary" is an old-fashioned term for an improvisation, especially one played by a church organist before a hymn. It is a little composition, at once willed and spontaneous, a voluntary action as opposed to an involuntary one. It is also outside the rigorous structure of the church service, a voluntary performance as opposed to a mandatory hymn. And since it is improvised, it has to be a surrender to the moment, an involuntary journey to wherever impulse might lead. Economou's "Voluntaries" capture the voluntary submission to the involuntary event.

Offerings small and intimate, "like drinks of water from our house," deliver intimations of a grand design. In "Voluntary 17," driving along the Cape under gulls flying for a moment at the same speed as the car: "The sensation born of that accident/will always stay as a felt flash/of the art of nature—a peek at the primal sketch/under the huge design that holds the details/of our separate seeming journeys."

Economou is a painter, and among the joys of this collection are beautiful reproductions of six of his paintings. *1892*, a re-composition of Bonnard's *La Partie de Croquet on Crepuscule*, is followed by five poems devoted to the same work, poems that range from what Economou calls "a description of the painting at the level of the simplest telling" to a set of formal inventions in varying degrees of abstraction.

If the meditation on art of the "Voluntaries" is one epicenter of Economou's work, the other is the urge to bear witness. "Il Gran Veglio di Creta [The Old Man of Crete]," a very frightening poem, develops an image taken from Dante's *Inferno* XIV, itself taken from Nebuchadnezzar's

dream in the Book of Daniel: "This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay." In Dante the image ceaselessly weeps, and a stream of tears caused by the whole history of human violence and betrayal pours down a great crack, fissuring its head. These tears make the rivers of Hell.

Economou's 13-line sonnet, three quatrains ending each on the word "center," is without a final line. It is incomplete, apocalyptic, and ends with a self-portrait of the poet, bearing witness to the truth and sorrow of history itself: "A guide calls or is called, with lips that are blessed/with power to unearth the lost dream of him/whose tears feed the rivers of barren hopes,/and says of him to us he is the center/of our story and our brains and that he falls."

"Century Dead Center," the title poem of the collection, has a deep relation to Dante and to Economou's translation of the 14th-century masterpiece *Piers Plowman* (University of Pennsylvania, 1996). Economou, professor of Medieval Literature at the University of Oklahoma, brings a lifetime of scholarship to bear on his translation of this huge medieval poem, which is often compared to Dante's *Commedia*. The long engagement with *Piers* has clearly influenced Economou's own poetry.

"Century Dead Center," a prose poem in 30 parts, is hair-raising. The personal and the social of contemporary life merge in memory—mediated, haunting, inescapable. The poem begins with the end of World War II and the image of the hanged Mussolini. This is a public memory, in black and white, as all memories of that time must be. It contains a cast of allegorical characters—the archaeologist, the mythomaniac, the prophet, the bibliophile. Each lie, as they must, weaving self-serving stories to make sense of the horrors of the century, its carnage, betrayals, and waste. The poem ends in a vision of circumscribing love, like the end of *Paradiso*, but horrific and ironic, "for it can come out of both sides of a mouth. And still sound fine." What is wrested from the wreck of the century is only the heroic act of not shying away, of contemplating. And that, as Economou sees it, is the point of poetry in the first place. As he wrote in "Ameriki V," a poem from an earlier collection, "The act/recalled/the act/of its recollection/the act/of recording that recollection/become all one mosaic/one song worth singing."

—BY ROBERT M. STEIN

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## Entire Dilemma

by Michael Burkard

*Sarabande Books*

Emily Dickinson once wrote, "Nature is a Haunted House—but Art—a House that tries to be haunted." On rare occasions one comes across an artist whose work feels truly haunted, as mysterious and resonant as the landscape or the constantly shifting reality of our dreams. Michael Burkard's poetry has this ineffable power, a quality never fully explained by delineation of style or subject matter. Through several books, Burkard has examined some of the most fundamental issues: the nature of "reality," the boundaries of language, how to survive the terror and longing of existence. His poetry presents a kaleidoscopic and rigorously self-reflective vision, encompassing at once a great tenderness for the world and an uneasiness with the surfaces to which we cling.

This distinctive work resists any particular program of form or content. One never senses that Burkard is experimenting with language just for the sake of experimentation. Rather, his innovations arise from a pressing need to understand the complexities of being and to test the limits of expression. Yet for all its ambition, the work has an essential humility. As the speaker says in an earlier poem, "Your Voice," he is searching not necessarily for "the truth,/but a small true thing."

*Entire Dilemma*, Burkard's seventh collection, is a subtle exploration of what constitutes the true things of a life. Although he is clearly dealing with his own history, the intimacy achieved feels not merely autobiographical but universal. As the relentlessly inquisitive voice returns to certain images and themes—the hometown, family, the lure of alcohol, the secret world of childhood—the speaker reaches for the shards of reality within memory, confronting the limitations of consciousness, of the very act of recollection.

Throughout *Entire Dilemma* friends, lovers, and neighbors are named—the names coming to feel almost like the words of a prayer. But the reader is continually reminded that these names could well be misremembered or arbitrary. The first poem of the book, "Before the Dark," begins with an address to someone named Fred: "Fred,/I don't know what to do./About me and you and the dream/which knocks and knocks at me, now has/me consistently in dream's time."

This is an attempt to make sense of a past which constantly nags at the speaker. But there is an understanding that the past cannot be recaptured, that the journey back must be a dream. And the meaning of these dreams is repeatedly called into question: "Dreams, Fred, may not be a sign to get in touch./They may be just the opposite./...gateways through which a you or me could pass//without having answered ourselves."

Even if these visions are only the beginning of new questions, the poet is willing to welcome "One more road for belief, or trust,/even if there

isn't an answer." Part of the poignancy of this poem, however, comes from the impulse to rest with one reality, to find an oasis of peace and clarity. In the poem's final section, the quietly lyrical couplets evoke a world of dusk, of neighbors talking softly in a yard; for a moment the poet recalls the longing simply to stop: "I wanted to stay put,/oh for just once,/where I was./But went off./Leave the town/slowly or it will//tear you up,/maybe even to pieces." So he leaves, both the town and the dream of the town, with the understanding that the dreaming must continue. In the end he calls into question the very names he has been invoking: "There's a name there//unnamed by everyone./Fred//is one/of many names."

It's that name unnamed by everyone which echoes throughout the book—a recognition that something never fully realized permeates our lives. However difficult, the poet has learned to accept this disquieting state as his own. As he says in another part of "Before the Dark:" "One gets more used to the moon when one knows one is a piece of it."

This spectral moonlight, a frequent image in Burkard's work, is evoked again in "Another Infinity:" "The railroad cars are infinite in the stolen light of the moon./The relationship has ended: the world has shoved off into another infinity,/where there is not a name for anything." In this other reality, the dislocations are so profound that even the "I" of the poem is called into question: "And I wonder about 'I,' who has nothing to do with this./And my mother and father in the railroad dark./I am linked irrevocably with everyone and everything,/and yet I do not exist." Such a voice, which questions its own existence, can be terrifying. Yet there is something oddly liberating in this radical uncertainty.

Burkard has always had a powerful lyric gift, but it is a gift which is constantly resisted. This resistance often results in heavily enjambed lines, a sustained tension working in counterpoint with the luminous surface of the language and conveying a sense of both great fluidity and enormous risk. Many of these poems hover at the edge of silence, making the reader acutely aware of the interstices between the words and that haunted territory which the words can never quite reach.

Sometimes this exploration of language is embodied in dreamlike, surreal imagery and odd dislocations of syntax. At other times Burkard punctuates his often cryptic lyrics with prose poems or verses of flatter diction and more straightforward narrative. For example, in "How I Shaded the Book," a neighbor knocking at the door for help drags the speaker away from his fascination with one of Graham Greene's novels and a desire for "one more wild prolonged fling" with alcohol: "I want to thank the woman and her child for interrupting my reverie./Although I proceeded to wildly continue an affair for drinking/I feel that couple as a pull from life, a pull//from a source I was for a final time denying./The book meant more than life. How I shaded the book/meant more than anything, anyone."

One of the book's most powerful poems, "Goodbye," begins with an incantatory renunciation of the traps of life: "Goodbye, no-brainer who married./Goodbye, rider of horse of sexual no's./Goodbye, man whose face leaned between thighs and licked and wept/but did not mean either enough./Goodbye, writer of antiletters and qualms./Goodbye, misnomer of he who could find a gem in a desert and now/writes smart verse instead." Finally this rage resolves itself into a calmer acceptance of "both hello and goodbye" and ends with a line which could be the motto of the book: "Goodbye to your face, only so I can/say hello to your face."

Many of the leitmotifs of the book come together in the title poem of *Entire Dilemma*—the emblem of money (manifested most powerfully in the image of the sisters: "Their poor eyes hardened like coins on a shelf"), the haunted town of childhood, a longing for "you" who is always about to knock at the door. And there is, as ever, the problematic relation to language: "the words/which come close, only to stray, only to judge you like the person//you are not, like the person on the top of a bell, being told/now, now, come down, come down from your bell you little dead bird." This undercutting of one line by the subsequent line, the crucial enjambment in "the person//you are not," the urgency of repetition, are typical of the ways in which the reader is drawn into the poet's search and never allowed to rest for long. This is not an easy world or a place of comforting truths.

Yet in the final poem of the book, "But Beautiful," there is a sense of momentary grace, an embrace of the world with a hard-won tenderness. As he does often, although perhaps never with such economy, the poet glances at several figures from the past, evoked with just enough detail to bring them into focus—but only for an instant, since he must be constantly moving: "But//beautiful is the drive/up the river's side./All these people/have taken it./Like a fairy tale/in which the hero//or heroine, son/or daughter, receives//a song of grace,/a secret grace, to//bestow upon the/journey when the time//arrives. But/beautiful to retrieve//them, one by one,/and one for all."

Throughout *Entire Dilemma* the poet attempts this act of retrieval, while acknowledging that it is never fully accomplished. The poem may be, as Frost says, "a momentary stay against confusion," but the imagination must return to the secret world—like the river ever flowing, revealing itself for a moment with dazzling clarity, but remaining endless, to be loved and never truly grasped. It is uncommon writing which embodies such endlessness. In a time of far too much cleverness and cacophony, *Entire Dilemma* serves as a touchstone, an indispensable reminder of just how quiet and redemptive poetry can be.

—KATHRYN LEVY

Kathryn Levy is a poet who lives and works in Sag Harbor, NY.





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## The Salt House: A Summer on the Dunes of Cape Cod

by Cynthia Huntington

*University Presses of New England*

"Our bodies, these salt houses of memory and desire, know what they want and need," writes Cynthia Huntington in her wonderful memoir of a summer spent in a Provincetown duneshack. The genre here is "nature writing," and the author's knowledge of the landscape of the Cape, its flora and fauna, is broad and deep. But don't expect pretty. Don't expect sentimental. Don't expect the kind of sweet watercolor canvases you find in every Sunday-driver gallery from the Canal to Race Point. What you'll find is tougher, truer—"the smell of smoke and stale bodies, wet socks, and the fear of going mad." Days hinge on the tiny dark fulcrums of damp, itch, and chill. Put two people, lovers, one of them a poet-naturalist, the other an artist, in a one-room shack for four months and the crevices of the human heart will be probed with the same zeal as wind-carved hollows of dunes and sea-wrack tide lines.

For several summers Huntington lived with her husband, Bert Yarborough, in a rented duneshack named *Euphoria*, 200 yards above the tide. Just over a dozen such shacks remain, pre-dating the National Seashore's land ownership, and by government covenant permitted to stand as long as the present owners live—or until wind, rot, or moving sand take them down. No electricity, a hand-pumped well, water heated by the sun or the flickering flame of a portable stove—the domestic accouterments are not important to Huntington. What is important is "a sense of belonging deeply to a place and to feel the deep response well up within you and become part of you."

Huntington is Professor of English and Creative Writing at Dartmouth College, and an award-winning poet. Her verbal gifts are lathered on like sunscreen to every page of the book. Pick almost any sentence at random—"The roses are furled, pouting on their stems, their soft, dark emerald leaves crumpled around them."—and it will bear reading aloud (just listen to those luscious syllables flourishing their summery s's and u's). But it is not only attention to language that makes a poet; it is also attention to the world. Huntington knows how to see and about what she sees. She describes two parts of a metal ship's boiler washed up and rusting in the sun: "their pocked, burnt-orange hulls taken up, molecule by molecule, into the air...silently burning." This is the chemistry of oxidation turned to art.

For all of Huntington's smarts, this is not a cerebral book. It is, rather, intensely physical. The author lives in that fleshy salt house of desire and memory, and lets sea, storm, sand, and wind gush in through the open windows of her senses. This can be exhilarating: "Cold now in my summer dress, my skin wet, goosebumps rising along my arms, I go stand next to Bert. He takes me under his arm, inside the thick shadow of his shoulder, his body's heat. We watch to-

gether from our window as the combers fume and churn and plow up the shore." It can also be withering, as when in fevered illness she wishes for the comforts of a fluorescent-lit motel, with "gleaming white porcelain, hot and cold water flowing at a touch, switching channels on the buzzing cable."

Augustine called it "the inconveniences of the mortal state," but who would have it any other way? Huntington wants "to love what dies." The price for feeling cool pump-water on naked skin, thunder rattling the windows, stars pummeling an empty ocean horizon is, well, becoming food for worms. "It is an act of the will to take the changing days as true in their own right, not justified by a progression. It is a moral act to treat the uncertain days of our lives as real and complete." She records for us the art of living in one's mortal skin—with euphoria.

Huntington makes no mention of *The Outermost House* by Henry Beston—that other writer who turned a sojourn in a shack on the Outer Cape into a classic of natural history—nor should she. Her work is so fresh and contemporary that it is monumentally unfair to ask her to place herself in Beston's long shadow. And in fact, *The Salt House* rattles its own shingles alongside that other book. Every generation must live for a while on the raw margins of civilization, plunging into the primal matrix in which our species has its origin. "This earth is so strange, what do we ever know?" asks Huntington. What indeed? But every generation must hazard an answer.

On a cold night in late summer Huntington considers the starry infinities, the yawning light-years that make us "catch our breath and marvel," and knows that we cannot live in such a universe without a story—a story that draws the universe into us through "our bodies and felt rhythms." The story might be one of navigation, she muses: "Sailors crossing an uncharted sea to new worlds were no more lost than we feel when we imagine the galaxies flying apart." *The Salt House* is as good a chart to those mostly uncharted skies and seas as we are likely to find.

—CHET RAYMO

*Chet Raymo teaches at Stonehill College in North Easton, MA, and writes a weekly science column for the Boston Globe. His latest book is Natural Prayers (Hungry Mind Press).*

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## The Amateur: An Independent Life of Letters

by Wendy Lesser

Pantheon



Wendy Lesser, founder (in 1980) and editor of the distinguished literary journal, *The Threepenny Review*, describes herself early on in *The Amateur* as an 18th-century man of letters who happens to be a female living in the 20th century. The aside illuminates the resolutely non-confessional mode of the book's 22 essays cum memoir and Lesser's artistic proclivities which, more than any direct self-revelation, form a portrait of the author. Called an "intellectual biography," the book moves, more or less chronologically, through crafted recollections, erudite musings, and critical reviews, favoring discussion of art and literature to personal admission.

When writing about dance, for instance, she reveals her conviction/fear that improvisation forces one to "bare your soul. It's like making a confession over a public address system, or having one of your dreams projected onto a movie screen . . . I don't want my interior life splayed out in front of other participants, except insofar as it happens to be revealed by the way I do the pre-set steps. Or perhaps I feel that to dance at all is to reveal oneself, almost to the verge of embarrassment, so that the additional dragging-in of one's inner life is bound to tip fruitful nervousness over into paralyzing shame." If writing is at all an act of self-revelation, Lesser will not tip over into humiliation by disclosing neurotica, obsessions, feverish passions, or the like.

That this discretion and her pleasing bookishness do not absolutely fulfill the promise and charm of intelligent understatement in an age of pornographic self-exposure, is perhaps because her reticence is uneven in its effect. Lesser's reserve allows for some crisp observation untrammelled by the obligatory emotional peep show, but it can also read like a willful lack of self-analysis. Both effects infuse the book's essays, which move fluidly through topics as divergent as the poetry of Thom Gunn, a visit to the nefarious Synanon drug rehabilitation center/cult, and a stint on an NEA panel.

When Lesser's reserve and erudition coalesce gracefully, the effect is light, direct essays such as "Vocabulary," an exploration of words that came into common parlance (at least according to the OED) in the author's birth year, and "Pas-

sionate Witness," on the choreography of Mark Morris. This discretion is less convincing when Lesser turns to personal anecdote, at times treating her own experience at such elaborate arm's length that the effect is more intrusive than not. For example, Lesser comments on her tribulations while a student at Cambridge: "I know of no American who attended Cambridge who did not have some kind of breakdown, and I was no exception. In my case, and I imagine in the case of many others, the dreamlike ease of the place was partly responsible. (It was aided, no doubt, by the quiet boredom, the dank weather, and the depressingly pervasive, unruffled respectability.) Because I had escaped reality, I was free to crack up." My relief that Lesser spares us both yawning details and mawkish self-dramatization does not assuage my wish for a clearer ring of truth, for thoughtfully honed trenchancy, rather than this glib pirouette out of messiness.

Again, the anti-climactic description of her decision to start *The Threepenny Review* might leave you, reader, scratching the page to know more: "Until I was 27, I had no idea I was intended to be an editor . . . my own editing career began without Hogarthian ambitions. I just wanted to take the next step up the literary ladder." The *Threepenny* portion of the book makes no reference to any niche she hoped the journal would fill, any writing she wanted to promulgate, any movements she hoped to espouse, etc. She does, without elaboration, refer to the "dangerous overdose" of poetry published by "magazines like *American Poetry Review*, *Pequod* or *Spoon River Quarterly*," while *Threepenny* takes an old-fashioned approach, mixing fiction with a "healthy" dose of poetry (10 or 12 poems a quarter), and critical work.

Further complicating Lesser's somewhat ambiguous relationship to the magazine is her offhand comment, in the Mark Morris chapter, that the truly important and "cherished" artists are, for her, "almost always men." This seems a rather feckless, if Bloomian, statement, particularly in light of *Threepenny's* affiliation with prominent women writers such as Susan Sontag and Louise Glück. Given that *The Amateur* relies on literature as a (or the) primary means of self-actualization and self-expression, Lesser's lack of definition as to what forms her tastes is curiously glib. Susan Sontag has written of *Threepenny*: "For literature in the traditional sense to continue in America, we must continue to have serious, eccentric, imaginative magazines. Alas, there aren't many any more that have that character. *The Threepenny Review* is one of the few, one of the very best. Therefore indispensable." This statement, often quoted in *Threepenny* advertisements, might have served as a starting point for such a discussion, perhaps through a preliminary examination of the terms "serious," "eccentric," or "imaginative" as defined by/for *Threepenny*.

Lesser offers insight into the dual results of her reserve in her brief opening essay: "We Californians have made a specialty of self-delusion. But we have also specialized in certain forms of clarity and directness (you can see it in the Los

Angeles paintings of David Hockney and Richard Diebenkorn, the film criticism of Pauline Kael). The clarity and the self-delusion go hand in hand, support each other, make each other necessary. And I am the child of both traditions." Unfortunately, *The Amateur* proves her right, for if she is always the clever and charming curator of her own self-exhibit, she has not always justified the show. Lesser surely has a lively talent for bringing forth Emma Woodhouse and Raskolnikov as she guides us deftly through the cities, jobs, attitudes, and ages of importance to her as a writer, an editor, and a person. Her spare, delicate prose style is pleasurable to read and brimming with erudition. But, are we missing a little dish, a little slip beneath the tweeds, a little visit from the 19th-century dandy, the early 20th-century manifesto-writer or the late 20th-century narcissist in addition to that dear 18th-century man of letters? Is the book otherwise a bit skinny? A bit arid? Might this finely-wrought and literary-ly peppered collection seem at times less pleasantly coy or elegantly ambiguous than flattened by an iron hand in an 18th-century glove? That, reader, is the question that you will enjoy—tripping as you go over Dickens, Henry James, and obliging ballerinas—while reading *The Amateur*.

—BY CAROLINE CRUMPACKER

Caroline Crumpacker lives in New York City. She is a poet and poetry editor for *FENCE* magazine.



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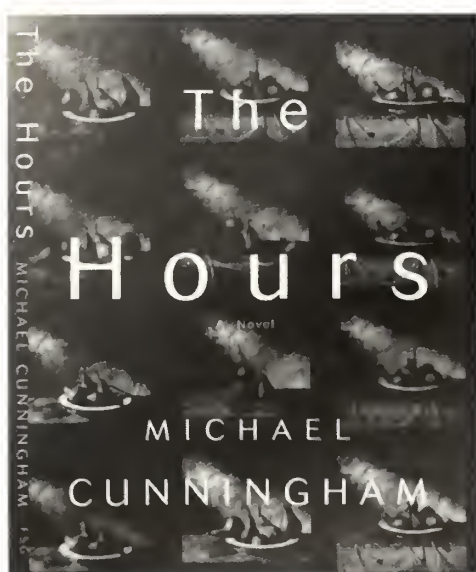
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## The Hours

by Michael Cunningham

Simon & Schuster, Straus & Giroux



As a reader, a writer, and a student of Zen, I feel an overwhelming gratitude for Michael Cunningham's stunning masterpiece, *The Hours*. It is a book in which not one lie exists. It is a book about consciousness. It is intense, internal, formal and keenly visual. It is exhausting, depressing, hopeful, heart wrenching and funny. It looks so deeply into who we are and what this life is, we are almost drowned by the simplicity of the truth that emerges.

Reading this book was like sitting *zazen*, watching the breath, watching each moment, sinking into the book-long, life-long *koan*: "What is it that keeps this moment from being complete?" Cunningham writes, "Laura reads the moment as it passes. Here it is, she thinks; there it goes. The page is about to turn." The characters wait and hope, distant from themselves. They worry they've failed, they sense their own performance, they notice they are detached, ghostlike, from their lives. They notice and notice, and as in Zen practice, it is this noticing that connects them up again. "She is herself and she is the perfect picture of herself; there is no difference." They are continually estranged from their own being—"a sensation of unbeing"—and continually led home again by a kiss, a nod, a bouquet, by the sound of plates and forks on a white cloth—arbitrary and unexpected agents of consciousness that restore connection and therefore hope. One might say sanity.

Sanity is the central balancing act of this book. It is the beloved and the charlatan, the emancipator and jailer. The character Virginia Woolf, "has learned over the years that sanity involves a certain measure of impersonation." And standing in her own kitchen, Clarissa Vaughan experiences a moment of clarity and estrangement:

She and Sally bought all these things, she can remember every transaction, but she feels now that they are arbitrary, the

spigot and the counter and the pots, the white dishes. They are only choices, one thing and then another, yes or no, and she sees how easily she could slip out of this life—these empty and arbitrary comforts. She could simply leave it and return to her other home, where neither Sally nor Richard exists; where there is only the essence of Clarissa, a girl grown into a woman, still full of hope, still capable of anything. It is revealed to her that all her sorrow and loneliness, the whole creaking scaffold of it, stems simply from pretending to live in this apartment among these objects, with kind, nervous Sally, and that if she leaves she'll be happy, or better than happy. She'll be herself.

"Whatever we see is changing," writes Zen master, Shunryu Suzuki, author of *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, "losing its balance. The reason everything looks beautiful is because it is out of balance, but its background is always in perfect harmony. This is how everything exists in the realm of Buddha nature, losing its balance against a background of perfect balance." And so with the characters in *The Hours*. They feel what they have is not enough and wish it were—a fervent wish. Zen practice is full of such striving to accept and live "what is"—which of course only eludes us more completely the harder we strive. All the fine moments of *The Hours*, which occur many to a page, with mind boggling consistency, almost non-stop for 226 pages, are effortless expressions of "what is."

"Oh, thinks Virginia, just before tea, here's death." "Everything she sees feels as if it's pinned to the day the way etherized butterflies are pinned to a board." "This moment, now, midblock, as the car approaches a stop sign, is unexpectedly large and still, serene—Laura enters it the way she might enter a church from a noisy street." "She wants to have baked a cake that banishes sorrow." "The air itself seems to have changed, to have come slightly apart; as if the atmosphere were palpably made of substance and its opposite."

Such a book is a reminder that luminous creation does not arise out of the hell of madness, the passion of insanity, but through our crisp attention to the moment. "To live in the realm of Buddha nature," says Suzuki, "means to die as a small being, moment after moment." I felt, in reading *The Hours*, at first keenly aware of the shallowness of my life, the limitations, the limited access seemingly ensured by a sound mind; the mind of Clarissa Vaughan or Clarissa Dalloway against the mind of Virginia Woolf, or Richard, the dying, demented poet, or the dissociated and depressed visionary/homemaker, Laura Brown. They seemed to have tasted a depth and fearlessness of vision that I continually hold back from in the safety of "small-beingness." And yet, as their feelings were expressed to me, I knew them; I knew those feelings. They were mine as well, had been at one time or another, had arisen in me and moved on, "like a train that stops at a small country

station, stands for a while, and then continues out of sight."

All the characters of *The Hours* are, essentially, transparencies (like the image of pears on the jacket of the book). Their words and actions, their perceptions of others and themselves, are all familiar to us. We effortlessly recognize ourselves in them. And they are all so different! We see all our selves. How does the author accomplish this? The novel is deeply personal and impersonal at the same time. It does not judge; it reveals. It does not wander into abstraction, but stays firmly and eloquently rooted in the world of objects. A chair, a shirt, a cake, a novel, a dead bird, another novel, yellow (cream-colored) roses—any and all of these serve as the "manifestation of the central mystery itself, the elusive brightness that shines from the edges of certain dreams; the brightness which, when we awaken, is already fading from our minds, and which we rise in the hope of finding, perhaps today, this new day in which anything might happen, anything at all."

Humor, in this charged yet neutral landscape, is strangely indigenous. Neither self-conscious nor crafted, it rises out of the story, raising it from within, creating a truthful lightness that cannot be "achieved," can only be found and released. It is the result not of wanting there to be humor, but discovering that there already is. It is as present in our lives (and therefore in the lives of the characters who represent us) as pathos. "I'm having cereal," Laura Brown's three-year-old says. "He grins. It could be said that he leers. He is transparently smitten with her; he is comic and tragic in his hopeless love. He makes her think sometimes of a mouse singing amorous ballads under the window of a giantess." We laugh and cry at the same time. We laugh with surprise: "When she enters the room he will look at her as if he is surprised and happy to see her here, his wife, of all people, about to remove her robe, drape it over the chair, and climb into bed with him. That is his way—boyish surprise; a suave, slightly abashed glee; a deep and distracted innocence with sex coiled inside like a spring. She thinks sometimes, can't help thinking, of those cans of peanuts sold in novelty shops, the ones with the paper snakes waiting to pop out when the lids are opened. There will be no reading tonight." We laugh with knowing: "Men may congratulate themselves for writing truly and passionately about the movements of nations; they may consider war and the search for God to be great literature's only subjects; but if men's standing in the world could be toppled by an ill-advised choice of hat, English literature would be dramatically changed." We laugh at the strangeness: "he exudes a complex essence made up of sweat, Old Spice, the leather of his shoes, and the ineffable, profoundly familiar smell of his flesh—a smell with elements of iron, elements of bleach, and the remotest hint of cooking, as if deep inside him something moist and fatty were being fried." And we laugh at the truth of hyperbole: "Nelly is herself, always herself; always large and red, regal, indignant, as if she'd spent her life in an age of glory



and decorum that ended, forever, some ten minutes before you entered the room."

*The Hours* is a transcendent, almost hallucinatory exploration of human beings and their relationships. At the same time it is traditional and utterly grounded—about as "experimental" as bellbottoms or teacups. Anyone who reads this book—and there may not be many of us because it is daunting, huge, merciless in its truth (which is beauty), and adamant in its requirement of the reader to be *present*—will, I believe, be transported in the reading of it. Since I have put this book down, I have felt unmoored, lost. I pick it up every day to try and gain access to its world again, to its wisdom. In doing so, I am able to remember what I long for and aim for in my own writing, which is in the deepest sense equal to my life. I am able to remember that I will fail, that "One always has a better book in one's mind than one can manage to get onto paper," that failure is the outbreath to the inbreath of endeavor, that all endeavor is losing-its-balance-against-a-background-of-perfect-balance.

There is, in Buddhist tradition, a term, "Dharma heir," which refers to the successor of a particular teacher and that teacher's teaching. I believe the same is true in literature, that we grow into our own voice but our voice lies in a particular vein, a lineage, a perceptual archetype, shaped by our teachers—the writers we read. The spirit of the great lady herself, Virginia Woolf, shadows and shines through *The Hours*. In one of the most extraordinary opening chapters I have ever read, we have the strange sensation of her own death floating in prose she herself surely would have used to describe it. In a seamless, an unthinkable courageous collaboration, Cunningham's genius seeks its expression through Woolf's. They are like two divers, sharing oxygen, descending to lung-bursting depths in order to feel the ocean's truth in its cold, unlit interior, where gluey-eyed creatures, slug-like or gaunt, live—have always lived—unseen and unknown by us, therefore uncreated. And the surface, so far above, takes on an auroral quality, distinctly not substance, not the gateway to breath and life, but the end of the deep. In the literal world, only one diver returns. Restored to light and air, ecstasy is hard to speak of. Yet he does so.

—MARGARET ERHART

*Margaret Erhart is the author of three novels, including Unusual Company and Old Love. Her essays have appeared in the New York Times, the Christian Science Monitor and various anthologies. She sits at the Pond Village Zendo in North Truro.*

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# Artist Portraits



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# The World and the Library

by Marcie Hershman

*This past winter, a proposal to move the Provincetown Public Library from its 125-year-old home on the corner of Freeman and Commercial Streets was met with scorn and dismay. "This is ridiculous," one local told the Advocate. "It's completely insane," another agreed. In his Banner comic strip, John Andert speculated on the building's future: out went the stacks, in went the t-shirts, and up went the sign—"GRAND OPENING Eugene O'Neill Mini-Mall!"*

*That the library demands triple its space to house more books, computers, and readers, was fully understood. But the initial plan to relocate the library to a new wing of the High School, blocks from town center, was unacceptable. The elderly wondered how they would climb the steep hill, the ethically minded decried the Town's potential sale of the building (deeded as a library, and only a library, in 1873) to commercial interests, and all lamented the loss of a beloved gathering place, our version of Hemingway's "deau, well-lighted place."*

*Following the outcry, new ideas arose: the library might expand on site (if property emerged like a miracle), might install only an annex at the High School, might swap places with the Heritage Museum. This last plan raised hackles even higher; if carried out, the half-scale model of the Rose Dorothea, housed on the Museum's second floor, would be sent out into the cold. In an ugly twist, three threatened species—our historic architecture, maritime heritage, and repository of literacy—were forced to prey on each other, while the real predator—our fading memory—circled overhead.*

*It's yet unclear where the library will find its room to grow. But we've seen how much is at stake, and that will help us save what we can. Here, novelist Marcie Hershman, a part-time Provincetown resident since 1996, reflects on the deep importance libraries have had in her own life and work. —Jennifer Liese*

It's a myth that writers write what they know. We write what it is that we need to know. What keeps me sitting at my desk, hour after hour, year after year, is that I do not know something, and I must write in order to find my way to an understanding. Writing is deep thinking, organized thinking. The questions that drive me as a writer, the ones I try to answer, are not born of some good idea, but of a deep inner need.

What I needed to know, the question that I spent three years trying to answer in my first novel, *Tales of the Master Race*, was this: Who saw my great-grandmother, Frieda Polak, taken out of her house, put on a wagon, and driven to Auschwitz? Who saw that happen? Had her neighbors seen her in her doorway, or standing in the cart? Surely they must have. That's what a neighborhood is about: we do witness each other's lives, even if out of the corner of an eye.

But focusing *Tales* solely on a group of ordinary Germans as they went about their days was just the beginning of the search. I had to go further; I had to create the world. And I'd have to get it right, all of it, if I wanted to learn the fullest answer possible to the complicated question I had before me.

I went to the library. In researching *Tales of the Master Race*, set in a fictional Bavarian town during the years 1939 to 1943, I read close to a hundred source books. I live two blocks from the main branch of the Brookline Public Library, and on its shelves I found much of what I needed to create the town of Kreiswald, and the "good German"—Aryan—citizens who inhabited it.

Take Ludwigstrasse, for example, a narrow street of connected brick houses near the center of Kreiswald. In the ground floor

flat of number 33, an ambitious mapmaker named Felix Breslauer, having just seduced his landlady, was feeling good enough now to lowball a bid on his neighbor's printing plant, a Jewish businessman whom the Nazis had taken away to "work in the East." But did I know if paper and ink were rationed for common use in 1941 Germany? Did I have a practical sense of how maps even were printed? I went to the library and looked it up. What types of bombs did the Allies drop on southern German towns? Phosphorous? What did it feel like, smell like, what happened to the pressure in the air as these bombs exploded? I went to the library. What were the 45 words on personal stationery that Hitler wrote, euphemistically "granting release" to the infirm and powerless, society's so-called "useless eaters." That, too, I found in the library.

Of course, Germany is a foreign land to this American writer, so you'd expect that I'd have to research it in order to get to an understanding of how people lived there, and how it had come to be that other people, like Freida Polak, were taken away, literally in front of their neighbors' eyes. I finished *Tales* having seen a lot that I didn't expect about how the Holocaust took place in the midst of everyday routines, and about my own complicated sense of anger and compassion for individual lives.

So, I was ready, if you will, to come home. I knew, too, that the story I'd begun to tell in *Tales of the Master Race* was only half done. I needed to close the circle.

I began work on my second novel, *Safe in America*. I hoped to understand what it means to be safe when those you love are not safe at all. I needed to explore this question because my brother Robert was ill with AIDS. I felt frightened, and lost, and angry, and full of a grief that hadn't come to me across an ocean or across generations, but which was springing painfully and wildly from my own life. From my dear brother's life. And when I began to look somewhere for guidance, I thought about what others I loved must have faced in terms of wholesale loss and societal indifference to their pain. I looked to my grandparents' generation yet again: safe in America they surely were, but they had to live each day here with the knowledge that they weren't able to save parents and siblings, back in a Europe gone mad with hate. And I looked to my parents' generation: safe in America they were, but their brothers were soldiers, fighting in the bombed-out landscape of a world war. And I looked to the present generation: to those of us in America who are safe, yet seem unable to protect our loved ones, even now. I looked because I needed to see my inevitable loss of my brother in some sort of longer historical perspective.

I wanted to write the story of three generations; I wanted to write of a family over time: the fictional Eichenbaum family of Cleveland, Ohio—loving each other, losing each other, holding on to each other. A family story. A nation's story. The sweep of history through individual lives. Human lives as what makes history.



I went to my library. Over the three years it took to write *Safe in America* I did an enormous amount of research not about a foreign country, but about my own country over time, the country I was born to. I read books of American social history, political history, military battles. I read books about American immigration policies and law. I read memoirs of those who lived through the 1930s, the '40s, the late '60s, and of course the very up to the minute present. I read batches of letters and diaries from soldiers in WWII; read about medical practices in the 1960s so I could prescribe the correct drugs for Evan Eichenbaum as he suffers a heart attack in 1967. I read about caring for those with AIDS, though I have my own experience of this.

I also used the archives of the American Jewish Historical Society housed at Brandeis University. There I held in my hands the cardboard immigration folders of strangers; held in my hands the thin onionskin pages, nearly transparent but for their inky-black typed and carbon-papered words. I read the letters from this immigration agency in Portugal, that immigration agency in Boston, this immigration agency in Cuba, that one in San Francisco. I saw the official documents stamped: Entry denied, stamped: Entry approved. I read the personal affidavits that said: I knew her back in Hungary, yes, and I swear she is who she says she is. I read notarized copies of financial disclosures so that a solvent-enough American citizen might sponsor the entry to the U.S. of a foreign applicant. All this, I held in my hands—and I didn't have to show the librarian anything, not one shred of paper to document myself, to show I was worthy to know such information, to momentarily let such small, such enormous, truth of lives pass through my hands.

All this, from a library. Other peoples lives, little facts, tangible details, all adding up. And my life: going home, writing a novel that might hold all of this, a big world with its small, wonderful, fallible, right-choosing, wrong-choosing people. I wrote *Safe in America*. I wrote it, as I'd written *Tales of the Master Race*, from all I knew somewhere deep inside myself, and from all that librarians, as curators of our culture, our wealth of knowledge, have safeguarded and allowed me to use. So that I can give something back to the world, to the library.

Let me thank libraries now, for the life they have truly helped me to lead—and for the lives and the larger world they've helped me to learn about.

*Marcie Hershtman, author of Safe in America and Tales of the Master Race, (HarperCollins, 1995, 1991) teaches at Tufts University and will be the 1999 Fannie Hurst Writer-in-Residence at Brandeis University. She lives in Brookline and Provincetown.*

*This essay was first delivered as a speech at the American Library Association's annual convention, Chicago, 1995, and published in a slightly different version in Poets & Writers, 1996.*



ELLEN ROSE GILES IN PROVINCETOWN, 1896

## Ellen Rose Giles: An Early Visiting Writer

by George D. Bryant

A little over 15 years ago several dusty cartons containing papers and photographs of a personal sort appeared at Provincetown yard sales. All related to a young woman named Ellen Rose Giles. Grace Collinson and Lester Heller bought the offerings and generously passed them on to me.

At first the contents seemed to have no connection to this part of the world, but after several hours of digging it was clear to me that Ellen had spent a considerable amount of time in Provincetown around the turn-of-the-century. For some reason an attic here (they didn't have an odor of cellar dampness) became the repository of items documenting major parts of her life.

There were packets of letters written in Italian, photograph negatives and all of the things that were gathered by active people before the dawn of modern methods of communication. I found a big folding map of a large swath of Pennsylvania woodlands particularly interesting. It was part of the inheritance of her relatives, the Rose family.

At the bottom of one of the boxes I discovered a typescript essay about the black whalemens of Provincetown. After years of searching for references to them in all of the proper places and turning up nearly empty-handed each time, I was presented with a fascinating sketch of them and their music, all through the gift of coincidence.

(From the Civil War to World War I, Provincetown whaling schooners were increasingly manned by black whalemens, most of them natives of the West Indies. Over the years 2000 individuals shipped. During the summer slack season the whalemens lived aboard the vessels, usually tied up to wharves along Commercial Street. In the evenings the men sang and danced to earn money from tourists. Their repertoire included African dances and English folk songs, as they were largely from the English-speaking islands. Descendants of the whalemens are still represented here, primarily among the Roach family, who live on Conwell Street. One child

of Alexander Roach, who sailed aboard the schooner *Alcyone* in the 1890s, survives.)

Ellen can be counted among the first writers to have been attracted to Provincetown. Tracing her life here and elsewhere has not been particularly easy as she tended to go wherever the spirit moved her. Lorette Treese, the archivist at Bryn Mawr College, and Arturo Vivante, of Wellfleet, have helped me sort it all out. Ellen was from an old and well-to-do Philadelphia family. She grew up in Florence, where her mother painted. At age 13 they moved back to Philadelphia where Ellen attended an art high school. From there she went to Bryn Mawr and graduated in Greco-Semitic languages in 1896 and philosophy in 1897, then on to Berlin, where she received a degree from the university in 1898. She was primarily a journalist but took a break from that field to study philology and sociology at the Sorbonne. During travels she became fond of Sardinia and settled there. Her prime interest was the earthy country poetry of the island.

Throughout her life Ellen was drawn to the lives of men who worked in rough and dangerous occupations. I have a series of her riveting photographs of Italian fishermen hooking tunafish on the shores of the Adriatic, with poles in water whipped into foam by the rugged activity.

Just before she turned 40 Ellen was killed in Sardinia by a single revolver shot. She was buried the same day under the direction of a nobleman with whom she had some sort of an association. The quick burial raised many eyebrows.

After her death a high school classmate wrote of Ellen: "She was a spirituelle girl...different from most of the other students, not eccentric, but her life and interests seemed apart from [those] of most students. Perhaps that was because she had spent much of her earlier life in Italy. She was always bringing the most wonderful art treasures to the school to put into the still-lives she painted. She spoke Italian like a native, often quoted Dante and Tasso, and told of the lovely days in Florence and Fiesole, and somehow always brought to mind Elizabeth Barrett Browning and impressions of the cultivated circle of Americans and English folk who lived in Florence 40 years ago. She was not inclined to make intimate friends with anyone, although her manner was always simple and kindly, and she generously shared the lovely things she possessed. When she found someone who was 'sympathetic,' her eyes would glow as she talked of the things which interested her until she seemed inspired."

If the Provincetown Heritage Museum opens this summer, there will be exhibits about the black whalemens and Ellen Rose Giles.

*George D. Bryant is an architect who investigates, reports on, and plans renovations for, old Eastern Massachusetts homes. He is a Provincetown native whose family has been here for three generations.*



Railroad Wharf at Boat Time, Provincetown, Mass.



The arrival of the Boston boat was the focal point of the day in the summer, when it was the principal means of transportation to the Cape tip. The steamer *Cape Cod*, shown here, operated from 1902 to 1910. The Old Colony Railroad, which extended to Provincetown in 1873, unloaded passengers where Duarte's Parking Lot is now, but the tracks continued across Bradford and Commercial Streets to the end of the wharf.

## Postcard Perfect

by Dan Towler

Postcards from the collection of Dan Towler document the town's transformation from fishing village to art colony and tourist resort. Towler shows slides of his cards, which date from the turn of the century to local audiences, offering commentary on each view (the descriptions below are his). Stepping out of Towler's darkened hall on a winter night and walking down an empty Commercial Street is like exiting a time machine to find that nothing, and everything, has changed.

—J.L.



George Washington Ready was the most colorful individual to occupy the post of Town Crier, announcing locally important events, a tradition continued until recent years. The buildings on far left and right are now Cabot's Candy and Exuma, near Ryder Street. Note the board sidewalk, which was built with Provincetown's share of a federal government surplus in 1838 and ran the length of Commercial Street.



This card, postmarked June 26, 1907, shows a horse-drawn "accommodation wagon" at the foot of Bangs Street, where the Art Association is now located. Until 1907, messages were not allowed on the address side of the card. This one says, "Dear Mother—these are the kind of trolley they have here. You can ride from one end of town to the other as many times as you wish for a nickel."



As the fishing industry declined, many of the unused buildings crowding the waterfront became artists' studios. On the right, at the foot of Johnson Street, is Provincetown Cold Storage, the oldest of the fish-freezing plants, which were major employers here into the 1970s.

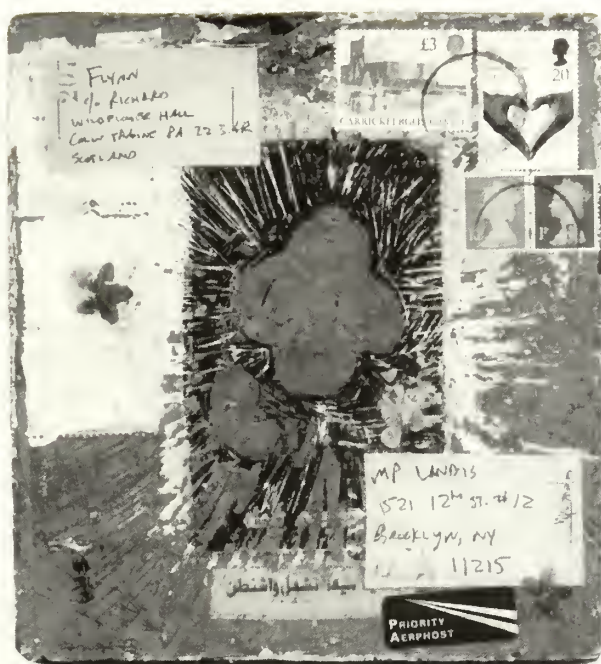
Dan Towler, whose lifelong roots in Provincetown have spawned a passion for local history and memorabilia, has written on Provincetown history for Provincetown Magazine and the Provincetown Pocket Book.

Commercial Street South from Railroad Wharf, Provincetown, Mass.



Commercial Street between Standish and Ryder has always been the busiest block in town. Silva's Fish Market is now the Post Office Cafe, and the building across from it with the second-floor porch is now the site of Mayflower Restaurant. The steeple in the center of the photo tops the former Congregational Church, next to Town Hall, now the Club Euro.





NICK FLYNN AND M.P. LANDIS, UNTITLED PANEL (FRONT AND BACK), 1997-98

## Nick Flynn, M.P. Landis, and the U.S. Mail

by Nick Flynn

Provincetown, August 1996. M.P. and I cut a remnant of 1/4-inch plywood in half, making two panels, each roughly 10 inches square. The plan is to mail them back and forth to each other, modifying what the other has done. We come up with a few rules: 1) We can alter the piece in any way, using any materials; 2) We will stamp, address and mail the pieces without outside wrapping; 3) We cannot have both pieces for more than 24 hours; 4) We will continue the process for one year, then begin again.

The plywood is already painted white on one side. I glue a small paper flag to the center of this side and mail it off before leaving for Brooklyn. M.P. draws a series of circles on the unpainted side with oil pastels. Primarily we want to see if the U.S. mail will deliver a piece of wood. It does. We mail between Brooklyn and Provincetown. The postal workers in Provincetown seem supportive of the project; when a piece is brought to the window it is passed around, commented on. It's unclear how the postal workers in Brooklyn react, since I mail from the box on my corner, though early in the second year one piece never makes it to its destination.

To M.P.'s pastel circles I nail a torn black & white photograph of an unknown boy, circa 1940. The other piece is returned with seven holes drilled through it, looking generally beaten, though the flag is still intact. Which marks were caused by M.P., and which by a hand or

machine at the Post Office, is impossible to know. The U.S. Postal Service has become an additional, if unsuspecting, collaborator.

I write across the white of the "flag" piece with a China marker, something about Horace Tapscott, whom I'd seen perform that night, and about a hurricane, which was coming up the coast. It is now Fall. M.P. covers the wood with red paper and what looks like tar, leaving the photo visible, but threatened. The tar is covered with roses and a torn seven-of-hearts playing card. Squares of paper covered with Arabic writing appear over what I'd written. I add images of a belly button and a car driving through lightning.

It is important not to be too precious at this point. M.P. whitewashes over the belly button and the lightning and scratches the name of our friend Billy, who had died one year before, into the white. Each piece becomes a way of measuring time. I cover the whitewash with oil pastel flowers. M.P. whitewashes over the flowers. This, I think, is beautiful, and hold onto it for longer than I should. I consider saving it, sending him a new piece of wood. I try to alter it only slightly, taping an innocuous doodle to its center, but it couldn't last. M.P. tells me, "You put too much thought into it, like you're playing chess, like you're making a move." I send it off, it comes back. The whitewashed flowers are painted over, buried under garish red housepaint.

I begin using sandpaper, trying to get back to something. The red can't be sanded off.

We are both living in Brooklyn now, moving deeper into winter. It comes back. I glue fragments of *Mona Lisa* over blackness. It comes back with *Mona Lisa* sanded off, three ghost squares marking where she was, a hole drilled through. I put a diamond stud in the hole, nail a tin circle to one corner. It comes back. The tin circle is ripped off, its outline scored into the paint, the word "TURN" scratched below it.

It's August, the end of year one. Inevitable. It ends. I like what it's become. I glue a "quality check" label to it and put it in the mail. Finished. Ghostly year. Layered. The places I liked are ruined now. I like the ruins. M.P. mails me the other piece for the last time. It is covered with notes we've written each other—torn addresses, instructions, doubts, returned now but scrambled, out of order, mimicking our memory of the year, whitewashed over and beautiful.

And we begin again.

*Nick Flynn's first book of poems, Some Ether, won the "Discovery"/The Nation Award and the 1999 PEN/Joyce Osterweil Award, which recognizes an emerging American poet. Some Ether is forthcoming from Graywolf Press in April 2000.*





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## Billy Stanley at the Dragon's Den

by Dy Jordan

**A** Tuesday night in February in Provincetown is one thing—you can hear the foghorn, lonely, wailing out in the bay, look from one end of Commercial Street to the other and see nothing but mist, diffused light, an occasional flurry of snow, or a cat. The Governor Bradford, where Billy Stanley bounces and tends bar, has a lot of slow nights in February. It must have been on one of those nights, after a few beers and nobody to play pool with, that Billy, with his poet's mind, began to chew on the notion that a certain Tuesday in February in New Orleans is something totally else—that would be Fat Tuesday, Mardi Gras. (That's Mardi "Graaw," as in "craawfish.")

At some point he must have made a phone call to his friend David Brinks, a publisher who organizes poetry readings at the Dragon's Den, on the Esplanade edge of the French Quarter near Decatur Street. He must have then run upstairs to the room he shares with guitar player and fellow Louisianaian, Spiky Mike Dumas, and said something like (if I know Billy, and I do), "We're gonna par-TAAAAA!" With that mantra Billy eventually convinced about 10 people to drive down to New Orleans, where he would emcee the Mad Poet's Express poetry reading at the Dragon's Den on the Thursday before Mardi Gras.

A second phone call, this time to me in his home town of West Monroe, sent another entourage to New Orleans. We didn't have to travel far. It's only about a five-hour backslide to Sin City from this rural buckle on the bible belt. Most of us don't need much of an excuse to slide on down to New Orleans for Mardi Gras, and we miss Billy and his poems. I mean there were times when a Billy poem could save the day. Like the time we were all sitting around drinking beer in the courtyard at Alice Jordan's house (she wasn't feeling well that day) and Billy came out of the house and pulled up his shirt. He'd painted red lips around his navel. Squeezing them in and out, he and his belly button premiered his poem, "Toilet Bowl." That's how Billy's poems are. They catch you by surprise and shake you up, and then you laugh.

It's different when he performs on stage. Then you're expecting a poem, but, still, there's always something you don't expect. I've seen Billy perform in Provincetown at the DNA Gallery, at the Collection Gallery, at the Mews, and standing on a bench in front of Town Hall like a misplaced Southern Baptist preacher. I've seen him burn poems as he read them, I've seen him curl up like a fetus and come up screaming, and I've seen him burn a cigar hole in the back of his hand just to keep from screaming. But it's not always something that dramatic that shakes you up. Sometimes it's just a quirky phrasing or a crazy/sane idea.

On the phone Billy said Spiky Mike was going to perform with him at the Dragon's Den. "He plays this funky swampy rural punk rock beat on his electric guitar, and I've been kind of chanting my poems over it. But you gotta hear it, I think you'll like it, so come on down. And hey, we're gonna par-TAAAAA."

Every year these balmy New Orleans dark back-alley courtyard vampire bars pull out the same purple, green, and gold tinsel. They dust it off and string it up over the usual twinkling blue lights, hang it from the spider webs, wrap it around baroque gold mirrors, throw some glitter around, blow some mojo on it, serve up jambalaya with stiffer than usual drinks, and every year, without fail, it's Mardi Gras.

Billy at the microphone says how good it feels to be back among this community of poets. He seems a little subdued. Billy is sometimes arrogant when he encounters a wannabe poet, but he will say "yes sir" or "yes ma'am" to a poet he respects. He's plenty humble tonight and does "Toilet Bowl" like a generational anthem. His head is shaved and beard neatly trimmed. He doesn't pull up his yuppie-looking white sweater to show his navel, but, thank God, he still says the poem through his belly button. He does "Butterflies are livin more than rox," "Dental Hygienists," and a new one he calls his "millennium poem," accompanied by the amplified swampy beat of Spiky Mike's guitar. I do like it. Mike with his green fingernails, black silk shirt, and spiky black hair, personifies that element of Billy's poetry that takes you to a dark punky edge and makes you feel at home there.

As Billy introduces his New Orleans poet friends, beginning with Reverend Goat, who accompanies himself on an electrified ass jawbone. As each takes the mic—Peter Orr, Rene Louviere, Slappy, Istanbul Edith, Amandafesto, and Jim E. Cousins—there is a growing aura of mutual respect. Old guys, young guys, old women, young women, words said slow, words chanted, words spoken so fast it takes a few seconds to catch up. There's a drum, a guitar, the jawbone. Some poets move when they speak, some stand still, some sing their poems, but mostly there's just the words. It's a cathedral of words. At the bar, on the balcony, in front of the stage, the poets hold the crowd—and in the French Quarter on Mardi Gras weekend, that's something. At the mic the poet Bill Myers says, like a lover, "Play with me, New Orleans."

As for the party, well, two million people came. Billy glittered his big bald head, and Spiky Mike was spotted at a fake Glam Rock show. They said he got agitated when he handed a broken beer bottle to the imitation Iggy Pop performer and the guy didn't know what to do with it. Spiky Mike ripped off his leather jacket and cut his own chest and they pulled him off the stage bleeding, shouting, "I'm the real shit, man."

A week later they were back in Provincetown, and it was still February.

*Once a year-round resident of Provincetown,  
Dy Jordan now lives on a barge in Louisiana.*



# Playwriting as Craft and Passion: A Conversation with **Sinan Ünel**

by Michael Hattersley

*Sinan Ünel was born to a Turkish father and an American mother in the United States. He grew up mostly in Turkey, but moved back to the U.S. in the late '70s to attend college. He has lived and written in Provincetown for the last 15 years. Last summer The Lark Theater production of his play Pera Palas became an unexpected success of the off-Broadway season. Written in 1995 and developed at Boston University, the play received the 1997 John Gassner Award and is scheduled for productions in Istanbul, Germany, and London this year.*

**MICHAEL HATTERSLEY:** Most playwrights spend years perfecting their craft, but you wrote your first—and, in my opinion, one of your best—plays, *The Three of Cups*, when you were still in college. How did that happen?

**SINAN ÜNEL:** *The Three of Cups* was a work of inspiration. Sometimes I find it hard to take credit for my work because it seems like it comes from somewhere beyond my creative ability. But after *The Three of Cups*, I struggled many years to learn the craft of playwriting.

**MH:** Had you always aspired to be a writer or did it just whack you over the head?

**SÜ:** When I was growing up in Turkey, I listened to a lot of musicals because that's what we had in the house—*My Fair Lady*, *South Pacific*, *The Sound of Music*.

**MH:** So Julie Andrews was your main literary influence.

**SÜ:** Exactly [laughs]. Of course *My Fair Lady* is a great piece of theater. In college I began to study architecture to please my parents but when I realized it wasn't going to work, I thought I'd try writing a play. I saw Lanford Wilson's *Fifth of July* on Broadway which really inspired me and I wrote my first play in Turkish. Then came *The Three of Cups*, which drew some attention.

**MH:** *The Three of Cups* is about two men who are haunted by the memory of another man they've both been in love with. The ex-lover is on their minds throughout the play and appears on the stage in their imaginations. This imaginary presence dominates the action and it works astonishingly well on the stage. I saw both the



SINAN ÜNEL, 1998 PHOTO: KEVIN MURPHY

New York production in the mid-'80s and the Provincetown Theater production five years ago.

**SÜ:** It's a young play, but I think it's a real theater experience. The essential combination of inspiration and craft doesn't come easily and it somehow happened in *The Three of Cups* early in my career. I haven't always been so lucky.

**MH:** We've been friends for 15 years, and it seems that after *The Three of Cups*, you spent five or six years turning out craftsmanlike work. As a poet, I've probably spent more time than you sitting around waiting for something to happen. Last week at the Poetry Festival in town, someone asked me, "How can I become a writer." How would you answer that?

**SÜ:** For me it's important to be disciplined enough to work three or four hours a day. It takes a lot of discipline and time to learn the craft. I can't say that I've learned it even now, but writing *Portals*, my first play produced here in Provincetown, was sheer torture. In fact, I don't know if it can be learned or taught. Craft seems so personal that I think people can only learn it on their own.

**MH:** Have you always sought feedback for your work? I know that you did a workshop in Derek Walcott's program at Boston University recently.

**SÜ:** That was very helpful. However it came very late. I was already in my late 30s. During my growing years as a playwright, I didn't have a mentor, which I felt was a great shortcoming.

**MH:** One of my teachers at Yale was Harold Bloom, whose great book is *The Anxiety of Influence*. It founded what I think is the healthiest strain in modern American literary criticism, by suggesting that the greatest writers don't simply adapt or learn from their predecessors; they have to repress them and react against them.

**SÜ:** So they imitate them without wanting to?

**MH:** Yes, or you could say they transform them or trope on them and achieve originality by denying their sources. Blake wrestling with Milton is a good example. The only person in English literature you can't play that game with is Shakespeare, who simply incorporates his sources, like Marlowe and Spencer. Who did you trope on?

**SÜ:** According to him I may not be a great writer because I don't deny my influences. I know of several great writers who don't. There are lots of writers I've tried to imitate and I can say I'm proud of that. There was a period when Lillian Hellman was my great idol. Of course you can try and try to imitate someone like Lillian Hellman or Ibsen, but you find out soon enough that it's impossible to write in that way because those were different times.

**MH:** Why Hellman? I would have expected you to name Williams, Albee, Mamet.

**SÜ:** Something in her voice. Her characters. Her language. She writes well-made plays. They're very calculated, like a piece of architecture. I tried that with *Portals*.

**MH:** I think *Portals* is a fine play, but I don't think it's your best work because it did have that air of craft. With *Pera Palas* it seemed inspiration was at work again. It seemed it came out of your meditation on your experiences with your family.

**SÜ:** I think writers always struggle to go outside of their personal experience, to try to widen the scope of their work. But it's a fine line. Because real experience rings true. And if you haven't done the necessary preparatory work, your fiction is going to fail. There is also the matter of choosing material that moves you in a real



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way. How much of your own life do you write about? How much truth do you put in?

**MH:** The more craft you have, the more of your own life you can afford to put in. Without the craft it's not art, it's therapy. Do you think that the more instinctive your craft becomes, the more you can risk personally because you have a structure in which to do it?

**SÜ:** Yes, I think that's true. I've learned that sound structure is essential.

**MH:** How would you say the structure of a play is different from that of poetry or prose?

**SÜ:** I'm not sure about poetry, but I think it was Albee who said that compared to prose, constructing a play is closer to composing music. Because it must have definite movements and it happens in real time. I suppose that can also be said of poetry because it's usually meant to be read out loud. I guess a play is more like a symphony.

**MH:** For years you worked with the Provincetown Theatre Company where five of your plays were produced. Then you went to Derek Walcott's program. How did these venues help you?

**SÜ:** The contribution made by the Provincetown Theatre company was vital. It helped me see my work on its feet, hear the words of the play—a very rare advantage for a beginning playwright. I was very lucky. At Boston University, I was able to workshop *Pera Palas* and I wrote *Single Lives* there. The PTC did a reading of that play too, in 1997.

**MH:** And what's happening with that play?

**SÜ:** *Single Lives* is the story of a lifelong relationship between two men. It takes place in Provincetown and it's very close to my heart. Like *Pera Palas*, it plays with the structure of time to contrast the young and the old. Right now the Mark Taper Forum is considering it for their yearly festival and I heard that it's being passed around at the Public Theatre in New York. Who knows? There are about four directors who are passionate about the play and they're looking for venues.

**MH:** Let's consider Provincetown for a moment, since you could argue that it's the cradle of American theater—O'Neill, Williams, and so forth. Our permanent theater burnt down in the late '70s. The Provincetown Theatre Company has been the community theater for 36 years. Four years ago, a professional theater, the Provincetown Rep, came to town. The two companies are collaborating on establishing a new permanent theater as opposed—or in addition to—performing in temporary locations like the Provincetown Inn, the Monument, Napi's, or the Unitarian Universalist Church. How do you see the future of theater in Provincetown?

**SÜ:** Both companies are struggling to find a home and to survive here, but I think a permanent theater is going to happen. It's tough to

develop ongoing theater in Provincetown because people have to make a living and you can't have talented people working for free. When I've done productions for the Provincetown Theatre Company, I've had to be the producer, the director, the advertising person. The recent theater I've admired in Provincetown has been done by the Rep. They have the resources and the personal commitment of Ken Hoyt. The Provincetown Theatre Company has been mounting a year-round schedule, and that has to be admired as well.

**MH:** Now the Rep pays pretty well, and the Provincetown Theatre Company is at least able to pay something. Is it possible that if we get a permanent theater here the Provincetown Theatre Company could develop new work and the Rep could pick it up, that Provincetown productions could go national?

**SÜ:** That's ideally what I'd like to see. We should have a winter workshop where playwrights are invited to spend a few months working on a play, where we can bring in professional directors and hire talented local and professional actors. The O'Neill Festival does that, but only for a couple of weeks. Developing plays in Provincetown is a very exciting idea.

**MH:** When you consider Provincetown's playwrights, poets, writers, and painters, you could argue that Provincetown has generated more art-per-capita than any town except ancient Athens or Elizabethan London.

**SÜ:** That's true. But it's 1999 and economically it's become impossible for writers to come and live here. In that sense, I think the Provincetown Renaissance is over. If you had a workshop that could support them, they would come. You have to pay artists to come here now.

**MH:** Are you working on something new?

**SÜ:** I'm working on another Provincetown play about AIDS.

**MH:** You were diagnosed with AIDS 12 years ago and you keep writing and becoming a better writer. Does this play draw upon your personal experience as well?

**SÜ:** The play is about the deliberate struggle to maintain hope when there's no hope. My relationship with my partner and my writing have helped me do that over the years. Living with AIDS is a one day at a time venture. And when you wake up in the morning and you're passionate about something, you're probably going to live through the day.

*Michael Hattersley received his doctorate in English Literature from Yale in 1976 and has called Provincetown home since then, while teaching at Harvard and elsewhere. A member of the board of the Provincetown Theatre Company, his most recent book of poems is called Cape Cod Light.*





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# Beyond the Windows: A Conversation with Jeannie Motherwell

by Peter Alson

*Jeannie Motherwell and I both spent our childhood summers in Provincetown, and knew each other slightly, yet didn't become good friends until more recently. I'm not sure exactly why that was, but we were both shy as children, and beyond a certain unmetabolized weight of artistic ambition that might have made a friendship uncomfortable.*

*In Jeannie's work, which centers on painting with photographs, appropriated images, and text, there is a play between shadow and light, water and boats, doorways and windows. That sometimes shows a glimpse of what might be Provincetown harbor, but more often is an obscure, sunlight-suffused window into a world that we can't quite see. Almost always, the work feels hopeful, as if there were something beyond those windows, as if perhaps there is a person inside hiding who is now ready to come out.*

**PETER ALSON:** You and I both have father figures who were and are huge presences in the literary and art worlds, for you it was your dad, Robert Motherwell, and for me it's my uncle, Norman Mailer. You became a painter; I became a writer.

**JEANNIE MOTHERWELL:** Imagine that!

**PA:** Are we crazy? Or just masochistic?

**JM:** I don't worry about that anymore. It's too late now. But the fact is I tried to give up painting for many years. Many years. I think wanting to become a painter was a natural impulse, growing up with and being around my father and stepmother Helen [Frankenthaler; married from 1958-1970]. They were my role models. But I also think when I was younger I worried too much about making it in the art world, because they had already done so. I just don't anymore. I feel like I have to paint now whether I'm successful or not. What about you?

**PA:** I think it's pretty similar. I started writing because I didn't know any better. I was 17 and I was suddenly seized by the urge to write a story.

**JM:** That's the age I started painting!

**PA:** I think inwardly I'd always fought against becoming a writer in the way you resist any family business, but, as you say, there's a strong gravity exerted by having someone close to you who is successful and famous and obviously enjoying what they do.

**JM:** I really fell in love with painting when I was in college, and finally understood why Dad and Helen loved it so. I remember writing Dad

letters all the time from college about the feeling. He was encouraging but also told me that it was a lousy business. Still, he thought I had the talent and the "bug."

**PA:** So he was supportive?

**JM:** Very supportive. But to have him come into your studio was a little intimidating. He'd walk in and

I'd say, "That's very good. Don't touch that." Or, "That's very good. It just gets past tacky."

**PA:** That must have been somewhat difficult.

**JM:** Well, I learned some things from those kind of criticisms but it also started me looking at my own work with his eye too much. On the other hand, it enabled me to understand his work really well. I can usually identify his best work before someone else, because I understood him and his process so well. But I think that's where I wasn't so sure about my own identity. I think that's probably why I quit painting.

**PA:** You did? I stopped writing for a while.

**JM:** For the same reason?

**PA:** I think so—if identity means knowing why you're doing something. I know when I came back to writing after about a year, it felt like I was making a choice, which gave me a different feeling about what I was doing. How long did you stop painting?

**JM:** Fourteen years.

**PA:** Wow, 14 years! That's an incredibly long time. That's not just a break.

**JM:** I was thinking I'd absolutely never do it again. I was married, had a child, and we were living a different kind of life. I thought, "Oh, this is much better." And it wasn't that I didn't have the time to paint, I just felt I was learning more watching my child develop.

**PA:** What changed?

**JM:** It's funny, I had taken my husband's name when we got married, but you can't ever really get rid of your name, so when I got divorced I took my name back because I thought, This is ridiculous. This is who I am.

**PA:** And you started painting again?

**JM:** No. Not right away. But one day a friend of mine asked me when I was going to start painting again, and I said, "What do you mean?" And he said, "Why don't you just have some fun?" And so I tried to. I started making cards and sending them to people, and it just sort of expanded from there. I began putting things on canvas, and the next thing I knew I was painting.

**PA:** How important was the idea of fun?



JEANNIE MOTHERWELL, EYES LOOK TAKE A LOOK, 1999  
PHOTO DAVID CARAS

**JM:** I don't think I knew you could have fun when you painted. I grew up thinking one couldn't say anything unless it was profound. Dad and Helen were already famous. That was the only way I knew them. I didn't see them starting out or struggling or what they went through to get there. I just thought you already had to know what you were doing. So it wasn't fun. It was really, really hard, and I was wrapped up in trying to find my own identity. But now I find it so much fun—because I'm inspired and I feel like I know who I am.

**PA:** Your use of the form of collage is interesting to me, as a fellow child of divorce, because in collage you're putting disparate fragments together and trying to make sense of them, making a whole out of broken pieces.

**JM:** I think that's very true. Not only that, but growing up in a house like Dad's or Helen's or Renate's [Renate Ponsold, Motherwell's fourth wife, of 19 years, whose photographs are featured in this issue] was like walking through museums all the time. Everything was an *objet d'art*, placed in a certain way, and you spent all your time looking around, and if you grow up in that you can't help but constantly notice how things go together. Also, Dad used to do things like wake up and decide to rearrange the paintings in the room, so all of a sudden everything looked different, and it had the same effect as collage. I think that's what drew me to it. The control of pushing things around, and the added surprise of what you get when you do that. So when you picked up on the idea of the different parts of your life being put together, that's really what it's about for me.



**PA:** In writing the only time things truly are alive for me is when I'm making discoveries and connections, when I'm being surprised, so when you use the word "surprise" it has resonance for me. Also the idea of making connections. When I think of collage I think of making connections between images that might not logically go together, it's more of an instinctive thing. In the text that you use in some of your collages—unattributed text, I might add . . .

**JM:** Plagiarism [laughs], total plagiarism.

**PA:** ...the word "connection" keeps coming up, and it jumps out at me. Was that something you were thinking about when you picked out those pieces of text?

**JM:** They actually come from a poem a friend of mine wrote about 25 years ago, and he happened to send it to me, and I started cutting it up, and then asked him if he would mind.

**PA:** Who is this?

**JM:** An artist and writer friend of mine named Jim Banks. I call him "Word Man." The poem really seemed to fit in my pictures, so I took it and went with it.

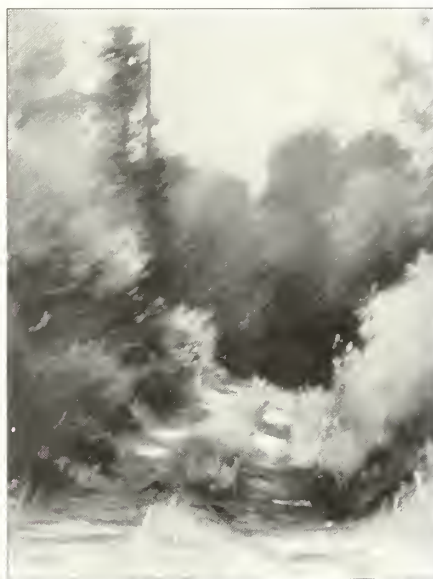
**PA:** In the piece *Eyes Look Take a Look*, you use a photograph of your daughter Rebecca's eyes on top of a woman's torso by Titian.

**JM:** All the things my daughter's going through growing up—the love, passion, innocence, pain—and what I experience myself as a woman, have parallels as well as separations, so there are connections but they're different. It's about the play between the two, the contrasts, that I was working with.

**PA:** Do you still look at things through your dad's eyes, either after you've painted something or during the process?

**JM:** Well, I guess at this point I don't have to worry about what he would think anymore. I'm happy with what I'm painting, and whether someone else likes it or not, I know that the work is me and in that sense real and true. I know Dad would believe in that. Would I be able to say this if he were still alive? I don't know. But I think if you are being honest and you are being true, that's really all you can do. For some of us it just takes a little longer to get there than for others.

*Peter Alson is the author of the memoir Confessions of an Ivy League Bookie, reviewed in Provincetown Arts '96. His writing has appeared in a wide range of national magazines, including Esquire and Playboy.*



Elizabeth Mowry "Vacation Path" (detail)

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| 6/13-7/1   | John Atkin "Distant Voices" wall reliefs<br>Artist's lecture-Sunday 6/27 5<br>Reception-Sunday June 27 5:30-8                              |
| 7/2-7/17   | William Evald Color woodcuts<br>Reception-Friday 7/2 6-8:30  |
| 7/18-7/31  | Miriam Fried Paintings, collages, prints<br>Breon Dunnigan sculptures<br>Reception-Sunday 7/18 5-8   |
| 8/1-8/14   | Alan Morehouse Sculptures<br>Iris Morehouse Paintings<br>Peter Romanelli<br>"A New Chautauqua" photographic prints<br>Reception-Sunday 8/1 |
| 8/15-9/8   | Janet Fredericks Paintings<br>Arden Scott Sculptures<br>Reception-Sunday 8/15  |
| 8/22-9/11  | Frank Milby Paintings<br>Al Davis Sculptures<br>Reception-Sunday 8/22  |
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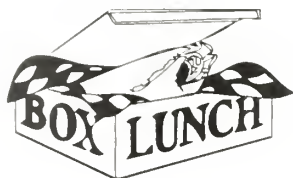
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## No Umbrella: A Conversation with **Tony Jackett**

by Jay Critchley

*Tony Jackett is an outdoorsman in the old fashioned sense—at home outside of houses, in the open air and elements. It's not about fancy equipment but about being vulnerable to, yet trusting, nature's unpredictability. Over the years I noticed Tony on the water in Provincetown or at the high school musicals in which one of his sons starred. We became friends after he assisted me with the buoy markers for the Swim for Life last year. A born-and-raised Portuguese townie and fisherman, Tony's love of the theater that is Provincetown has challenged his reserve and perked his imagination and curiosity. He moves slowly but assuredly, and quotes Shakespeare with a smirk on his face.*

**JAY CRITCHLEY:** What is it like to be at sea alone in the night?

**TONY JACKETT:** It's sort of spooky. One minute the stars are bright and the next the fog is so dense you think it could pluck you right off the boat—like a hawk, come and scoop you up. There are twists and turns, like in a dream. For instance, we'd seem to be fishing behind the Monument, but that doesn't make sense because there's no water there. Those are thoughts that will do you in.

**JC:** You felt there was some sort of danger that was creeping up on you, that the fog might take you up. What about drowning? Have you ever fantasized about taking a journey under the water?

**TJ:** Sure. These thoughts occurred more when I fished alone, which I did a lot. I loved the isolation and the freedom it gave me, but with that was risk. When we got through, it was very intoxicating, like jumping out of a plane without a parachute and on the way down someone gives you one.

**JC:** You use the term "we" even when you're speaking of being alone. Do you mean you and the boat?

**TJ:** Yeah, that was the other woman in my life. *Josephine*, an old pilot boat, a 45-foot dragger.

**JC:** You talk a lot about the weather and in a more general sense, nature. It was the environment that attracted me here 24 years ago. Do you have a different relationship to the water than us landlubbers?

**TJ:** Being out there you see things that you otherwise wouldn't see. The sun rises and the sun sets and you see the colors in the sky and you're surrounded by this wonderful sense of openness. I would get exalted out there. Every once in a while I'd get a little crazy, singing. At times I would shut the engine down and just drift. At times I'd crash on the boat, especially if there

was good weather. The weather was who I answered to. It ran my life.

**JC:** Did you have an instinct about it?

**TJ:** The more experience you have the better your instincts. You could sometimes get your best fishing prior to the storm, so you would push your luck. Once I was fishing a mile off Sesuit in terrible weather. The wind started to scream—a high whistling sound in the rigging—and ripples skimmed across the surface of the sea. We got hung up on a wreck. Sometimes you know something is under you but you get too close because that's where the best fishing is. So when you hang up you say, 'Jeez, how could I be so stupid?'

**JC:** Does your intuition tell you where the fish are? Is it like people's secret blueberry and cranberry patches on shore?

**TJ:** You get a feel for where the fish are going to be at a certain time of the year. And you get little signs. If you're finding fish other fishermen hear about it and you've got company.

**JC:** Is there a camaraderie?

**TJ:** Well what comes around, goes around. You don't put it over the radio, and I tended to be cagey. There were times when I felt good about giving somebody a tip, and I got plenty of help.

**JC:** Is that because you're a nice guy?

**TJ:** Oh no, everyone got information. Everyone helped out. That was more gratifying than being top dog. But some people were very businesslike, on the pile all the time. The pile is the fish. Over the years it got kind of tight and there were altercations.

**JC:** Tell me about your family history. Many were fishermen, right?

**TJ:** My grandfather harpooned swordfish his whole life, until he was about 70. He came here from Portugal at the turn of the century, the oldest of 10. Others from the family came, too, but they all went back. I started fishing with my dad after a couple of years of college. He was anxious to get me in the wheelhouse and I had good mentorship, so in no time I was running the boat. My Uncle Louie also had a fishing boat. I was around a tradition and a lot of stories, and even though I got seasick as a boy and didn't seem to have it in my blood, like my brothers, it became my career.

**JC:** Did most of your classmates own or work on a boat? Was fishing considered one of the best businesses to be in?

**TJ:** Yes. But now, for most it's horrible. You invest a great deal in that life and to accept the loss is difficult. One of my dearest friends and I grew up on the same street. Later on we lived next door to each other and raised our families together. We both bought boats around the same time and we both went down the tubes at the same time. We were part of the era of everything changing. I remember thinking in the mid





TONY JACKETT, 1999 PHOTO JAY CRITCHLEY

'80s, when it was getting kind of tough, that my generation could get out. But my father's generation had to dig out their savings and put it into a dinosaur. They were trying to finish out the ride, too old to go into a different career.

JC: With all this change, where do you see Provincetown heading?

TJ: A lot of people think P'town has changed so much, that it's too expensive to live here, that taxes keep going up, that it could get to the point where only the very rich can live here. I've always said I'm not going to leave, even if it means sleeping under the pier.

JC: You must have so many memories here that it's impossible to imagine leaving.

TJ: That's true. I remember spending a lot of time with my mother's father as a boy. During the wars, he walked the beaches on patrol for the Coast Guard. I went to all the dumps with him. We'd visit the harbormaster at the pier. He loved to go hunting. He had his little shed and his junkyard in the backyard. I remember the rabbits and deer hanging upside down, a kerosene stove. He lived a very simple life.

JC: He sounds like my father, a trapper who raised mink for a hobby. We lived in the suburban/rural area of Forestville, Connecticut. There was a dairy farm across the street. My dad would bring back muskrats, mink, racoons, and skin them right in the basement. I remember the smell.

TJ: Smells remind me of certain periods of life. My grandmother had a pot of something brewing all the time. Lunch began at 10 o'clock in the morning. The neighborhood was robust with children, kids, gangs, a lot of backyard activity, spin the bottle, stuff like that. We had the Blessing of the Fleet and ball games with fishermen dressed up, leading cheers. There was one guy named Tony Thomas, a character. He would dress up as Santa Claus and his brother as Clara

Bell and they would come to the school and entertain all the kids.

JC: Santa and Clara Bell together! I knew that you and I shared an affinity for nature, but I didn't know you have an appreciation for costuming.

TJ: We do share an affinity for nature. The Swim for Life—that's how we hooked up. It was really fortuitous because you introduced me to a lot of people. The art world is so vibrant. And the Swim!—to observe the phenomenon of so many people participating and you—like a general leading an army into the water! Tell me, why do you think the Swim has been so successful?

JC: I think it's about the magic of Provincetown. It has an inherent energy. It's on the water, which is a purifying thing. It's about people's love for Provincetown. And it's at the right time of year. Also it's a challenge for people to swim 1.4 miles across the harbor. It's not a "walk" for life. There's a real challenge.

TJ: I wouldn't even attempt it. I'd drown!

JC: You were on the water for 25 years and now you work on land as the town's shellfish constable. What is that transition like?

TJ: Challenging. When this job came up I had a lot of misgivings. There were certain tools you needed, like a 4-wheel-drive Jeep, which was expensive. I had to get a small skiff to get water samples and propagate the flats. It was also clear that this job would pay less money. But I thought, I'll give it a shot. I wanted to be progressive. After all those years, I could use the same technology that helped deplete the fishing stock to help restore the shellfish stock. It was like choosing a higher path. What's rewarding is working with the public, like when people ask how to dig clams without breaking them.

JC: Do you miss being on the water?

TJ: I just miss being a hot shit, actually. I felt very lucky.

JC: Do you see yourself being a hot shit again?

TJ: Yeah. Attitude makes people respond. One great thing about living in a small town is that once you become comfortable with who you are and expose yourself, people are going to see your faults. Not everyone is going to like you. They will take shots at you and you need to have a thick skin and just let it roll like water off a duck.

JC: What are some of the disadvantages of being in a small town, Provincetown in particular?

TJ: I'm not sure there are any. I could have a quarter in my pocket and feel like I have a million bucks because of living here. People who've lived other places say this is their favorite place in the world. I suppose the disadvantage is that you may be less inclined to want to travel.

JC: You traveled to New York City this spring. This was your first visit there besides taking fish to Fulton's Market, right?

TJ: Yes, I went with my son-in-law, and son. We stayed at Arnie Charnick's apartment in the East Village. He had a couple of bikes so we checked out everything on bicycle.

JC: You're a grandfather, a man in the "twilight of your prime." It's amazing to me that you bicycled your first time in New York.

TJ: It was early Sunday morning so there was very little traffic. Besides, I have a Peter Pan syndrome. I just started growing up in the last six or seven years. Grandchildren do that.

JC: I have a grandchild who's six weeks old and I'm still in shock. No one consulted me about it! You've lived in Provincetown all your life. Half the people in Provincetown are either from New York or lived in New York and this was your first time there.

TJ: It's the Provincetown-New York connection. I've always gotten a vicarious kick out of listening to others talk about where they're from. It was time. And it was awesome. I spent most of my time outdoors, even in the rain. I made it a point to walk a little quicker than the rest of the crowd, with my head in the clouds, looking at the tall buildings. Everyone had an umbrella but me.

*Jay Critchley's proposal for a Survivalist Camp Resort appears elsewhere in these pages.*





HAWTHORNE CLASS ON THE WHARF, C. 1915

# CENTENNIAL

## *celebrations*

## Forum 99

A series of symposia and performances: dance, art, theater, music, literature, politics, architecture, and film.

At the Provincetown Art Association and Museum,

Friday nights in July and August  
from 6-7:30 pm.

Admission: 99 cents!

## THE CENTENNIAL FALL ARTS FESTIVAL

September 23 to October 3, 1999

10 days of exhibitions,  
studio visits, gallery  
walks, artists talks,  
theater, concerts,  
auctions, symposia  
and readings...

PRESENTED BY PROVINCETOWN'S  
EIGHT NON-PROFIT ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

- THE FINE ARTS WORK CENTER
- WOMR
- PROVINCETOWN REPERTORY THEATER
- PILGRIM MONUMENT AND MUSEUM
- THE COMMUNITY COMPACT
- PROVINCETOWN THEATRE COMPANY
- PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM
- PROVINCETOWN ARTS PRESS

Check local newspapers for full schedules of events.



# *from the archives...*



ART ASSOCIATION'S CETA STAFF, 1979  
STANDING, L TO R: GRANT KING, ALEC WILKINSON, DON STERTON, RICHARD SMITH, SEATED, L TO R: DENISE CASSENS, SUSAN BAKER, CANDY JERNIGAN, PETER MACARA, CAROLE BOLGER, DENISE SARNLAD, CAROLYN MAISEL, STONEY CONLEY. PHOTO: BILL TCHAKIRIDES



EDWIN DICKINSON, ROSS MOFFETT, AND KARL KNATHS ON THE STEPS OF THE ART ASSOCIATION, 1967  
PHOTO: GEORGE YATER



COSTUME BALL, WITH PRIZE-WINNER MARSDEN HARTLEY IN SHEIK'S COSTUME, 1916. PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN



ART ASSOCIATION EXHIBITION IN TOWN HALL, 1916  
PHOTO: WALTER STIFF



HANS HOFMANN CLASS CRITICISM, C. 1938  
L TO R: ROBERT DE NIRO, BEULAH STEVENSON, HANS HOFMANN, PERLE FINE. PHOTO: TOM MILIUS



HAWTHORNE PAINTING CLASS ON BEACH, C. 1925  
PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN



PREPARING FOR THE ANNUAL COSTUME BALL, 1963  
L TO R: JOANNE SCHNEIDER, LOUISE WALKER, HUDSON WALKER, ABE BURROWS. PHOTO: GEORGE YATER



ART ASSOCIATION GALLERY, 1930  
PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE ARCHIVES OF THE  
PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM



# Gallery Guide

## JAMES BAKKER

236 Newbury Street  
Boston, MA 02116 • 617 262-8020  
Old & new Provincetown artists. Behnken, Blum, Busa, Ditacchio, Dutoit, Eval, Hawthorne, Hensche, Hondius, Knaths, Lazzell, L'Engle, Lindenmuth, Mazur, McKain, Moffett, Orlowsky, Warthen, Weinrich, and others.

## BLUE HERON GALLERY

20 Bank Street, Wellfleet • 349-6724  
Featuring Steve Allrich, Claire Flanders, Jerry Geier, Steven Graber, John D. Neubauer, Olaf Palm, Kevin J. Shea, Donald Voorhees.

## CAPE COD SCHOOL OF ART

48 Pearl Street • 487-0101  
The descendant of Charles Hawthorne's Cape Cod School of Art (1899-1930), subsequently directed by Henry Hensche and now Lois Griffel.

## DAVIS GALLERY

Route 6, Wellfleet • 349-0549  
New gallery directed by Provincetown ceramist Al Davis, showing artists from the reclusive Beachcombers.

## CALDWELL GALLERY

PO Box 310  
Manlius, NY 13104 • 315 682-6551  
www.caldwellgallery.com  
Buying, selling, and appraising traditional and modern artworks. Huge on-line catalogue.

## CAPE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

60 Hope Lane, Dennis • 385-4477  
Summer-long exhibition celebrating 100 years of impressionism on Cape Cod.

## CHERRYSTONE GALLERY

East Commercial Street, Wellfleet • 349-3026  
Directed by Sally Nerber, showing, informally and intimately, work by Paul Bowen, Helen Wilson, Janice Redman, Robert Dutoit, Christina Schlesinger, Noa Hall, and others.

## COVE GALLERY

Commercial Street, Wellfleet • 349-2462  
Representing: Leonard Baskin, Mac Berton, Meg Black, Tomie De Paola, John Grillo, Wolf Kahn, Herman Maril, Judith Shahn, and others.

## DNA GALLERY

288 Bradford Street • 487-7700  
Contemporary painting, sculpture, installation, video, readings, and performance, including Bob Bailey, Breon Dunigan, Jenny Humphreys, Peter Hutchinson, M.P. Landis, Joel Meyerowitz, Anna Poor, Daniel Ranalli, and Tabitha Vevers.

## FINE ARTS WORK CENTER

HUDSON D. WALKER GALLERY  
24 Pearl Street • 487-9960  
FAWC conducts workshops for artists and writers in the summer and long-term off-season residencies. The Walker Gallery exhibits artists associated with the Work Center.

## FOWLER GALLERY

423 Commercial Street • 487-3388  
Ron Fowler paints portraits, landscapes, and abstract works.

## JULIE HELLER GALLERY

2 Gosnold Street • 487-2169  
Extensive inventory of early Provincetown artists, including Hawthorne, Lazzell, Hensche, Knaths, and the estate of Maurice Freedman.

## BLUE HERON GALLERY

Bank Street, Wellfleet • 349-6724  
New ownership this year!

## CORTLAND JESSUP

432 Commercial Street • 487-4479  
Artists include: Joe Fiorello, Yayoi Kusama, Haynes Ownby, Kathi Smith, Mike Wright. Cortland Jessup also sponsors Lamia Ink!

## KENNEDY STUDIOS

335 Commercial Street • 487-3896  
Featuring Robert and Michelle Kennedy and many other artists.

## MARTAYLAN-LAN

48 East 57th Street  
New York, NY 10022 • (212) 308-0018  
The art of cartography: original antique maps and sea charts. Illustrated catalogue available.

## SIMIE MARYLES

435 Commercial Street • 487-7878  
Simie Maryles' landscapes in oil, pastel, and mixed media; sculpture by Moe Van Dereck.

## ALBERT MEROLA GALLERY

424 Commercial Street • 487-4424  
Showing James Balla, Peter Busa, Ann Chernow, Donna Flax, Lester Johnson, James Hansen, Jacqueline Humphries, Michael Mazur, Pasquale Natale, Jack Pierson, Duane Slick, Sallyann Wekstein, Frank Yarmus, and others.

## JOHN J. MULCAHY

262 Main Street, Wellfleet • 349-0265  
Featuring the self-portraits and landscapes of John J. Mulcahy, after 40 years, still painting.

## MUSSELMAN GALLERY

379A Commercial Street • 487-9954  
Works by Jim Davis, Phyllis, Joseph Vorgity, Barbara Nitki, and Jerry Coker.

## HILDA NEILY

432 Commercial Street • 487-6300  
Works by impressionist master Hilda Neily.

## JOSEPH T. PATRICK

403 Commercial Street • 487-2444  
Fine photography. By appointment only.

## ANNE PACKARD GALLERY

418 Commercial Street • 487-4690  
Located in a former church, showcases the paintings of Anne Packard, Cynthia Packard, and Lesley Packard, the rising star of the gallery.

## PASTEL SOCIETY OF CAPE COD

PO Box 489  
Barnstable, MA 02630 • 508 362-1256  
A non-profit organization founded in 1995 by Sarah Fielding Gunn.

## PASSIONS GALLERY

336 Commercial Street • 487-5740  
Work by Colette Hebert, Paula Vazquez, B. Hoynes, D. Segl, J. Francesconi, Eric Kluin, Rene Porter, P. Vigliotti, and Noel.

## PILGRIM MONUMENT & MUSEUM

High Pole Hill • 487-1310

Best view of Cape Cod from the top of the Monument. Historical museum. Home of the Provincetown Repertory Theater.

## NICOLETTA POLI STUDIO

15 Howland Street • 487-7859  
Colorist Nicoletta Poli and abstract expressionist R. D. Knudson ("Rick the Stick") have opened their studios to the public.

## PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION & MUSEUM

460 Commercial Street • 487-1750  
One of the foremost art museums in the country with a permanent collection of regional art from the past 80 years. Organized in 1914. Exhibitions, concerts, events throughout the year.

## PROVINCETOWN GROUP GALLERY

465 Commercial Street • 487-8841  
A seaside gallery with urban sensibility committed to emerging artists: Jennifer Bradley, Aris Logothetis, Sky Power, Sacha Richter, John Ruggieri, Guy Yanai.

## RICE/POLAK GALLERY

430 Commercial Street • 487-1052  
Comprehensive collection of contemporary art, including Olga Antonova, Bob Birbeck, Larry Calkins, Elli Crocker, Ellen Lebow, Jan Collins Selman, Linda Touby, Robin Winfield.

## SCHOOLHOUSE CENTER

494 Commercial Street • 487-4800  
Location of the Driskel Gallery for photography and the Silas-Kenyon Gallery for contemporary fine art. Weekly events. Upstairs rehearsal space for artists, writers, and performers.

## BARBARA SINGER FINE ART

18 Sparks Street  
Cambridge, MA 02138 • 617 491-5525  
Artists exhibited: Michael Costello, Marty Epp, Peik Larsen, Todd McKie, Maud Morgan.

## SONG OF MYSELF PORTRAIT STUDIO

349 Commercial Street • 487-5736  
High-quality black and white portrait photography by Brad Fowler. Expect glamour, poetry.

## TRISTAN GALLERY

148 Commercial Street • 487-3939  
Work by Dianna Matherly of DLM Design. Season features Allen, Porges, Spinks, Civitarese, Teubner and Towne.

## BERTA WALKER

208 Bradford Street at Howland • 487-6411  
Representing: Varujan Boghosian, Robert Henry, Brenda Horowitz, John Kearney, James Lechay, Richard Pepitone, Jim Peters, Paul Resika, Hyman Shrand, Selina Trieff, Nancy Whorf. Folk furniture and a major collection of African art.

## T.J. WALTON GALLERY

173 Commercial Street • 487-0170  
Showcase for T.J. Walton, including Chet Jones, Paul Bowen, and Marty Epp.

## JOAN WASHBURN GALLERY

20 West 57th Street, 8th floor  
New York, NY 10019 • 212 397-6780  
Features work by Richard Baker, Bill Jensen, Myron Stout, and others associated with Cape.

## WOHLFARTH GALLERY

234 Commercial Street • 487-6569  
Representing students of the Cape Cod School of Art: Lois Griffel, Robert Longley, William Papaleo, Cedric and Joanne Egeli.



## Summer 1999 Artists

new gallery artists and familiar favorites:

d. edwards

louis kozma

sky power

stephanie cramer

aris logothetis

maggie simonelli

greg gorman

will sherwood

timothy basil ering

tom canney

sara frances egan

ellen sperling



moby dick, timothy basil ering, acrylic on paper, 1997

## provincetowngroupgallery

465 commercial street provincetown, ma 02657

[www.bershad.com/pgg](http://www.bershad.com/pgg)

508.487.8841 [for gallery hours, exhibition details]

visit our new somerville gallery in davis square:

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[www.bershad.com/gb](http://www.bershad.com/gb) 617.629.9400



# Sideo Fromboluti



Rain 1982

Pastel and charcoal on paper

30 x 23 inches

Provincetown Art Association and Museum  
August 21 through September 8, 1998

Galerie Darthea Speyer, Paris  
January 21 through March 6, 1999

The Forum Gallery, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh  
April 8 through July 9, 2000

Catalog Available  
*Summer Painting*  
Introductory essay by Michael Brenson  
Chronology by April Kingsley